

MY TIMES AND I

ATMA-JIVANA-GARTA
OR
PHAKIRMOHANIA SENAPATI

*Translated from Oriya
by
JOHN BOULTON*

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ATMA-JIVANA-CARITA
OF
PHAKIRMOHANA SENAPATI

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ORISSA SAHITYA AKADEMI

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FOR MY SONS

RALPH, SIMON AND PETER

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PREFACE

Phakirmohan Senapati (1843-1918) is one of the *paterfamilias* of Indian Novel. He blazed the trail of "Social Realism" in Oriya Novels, nay in Indian Novels; which till then were essentially romantic in character. Phakirmohan in his novel *Chamana Athaguntha* (Six Acres and eight gunthas) published in 1898 for the first time articulated the urges and aspirations of the common masses for redemption from the tentacles of feudal landlords and usurious moneylenders. Historically, Premchand after about two decades reflected these trends in his works in Hindi. In Bengali literature, not before the *Kallola Yuga*, in the Twenties, Social Realism, was familiar in the Bengali novels, Romanticism was still the most noticeable characteristic. In Telugu literature, the "Navela" or the Novel, which made its beginning towards the close of the seventh decade of the 19th century, was also by and large romantic in character. Similar is the case with the Assamese and other Indian Languages. But the stark reality of social condition, delineated with authenticity in the pages of *Chamana Athaguntha*, leaves the reader astounded with pathos and horror. Ruthless exploitation by witty landlords and usurious moneylenders, the corruption of the police and the petty officialdom, sheer helplessness of the exploited and the injured to save themselves from the tyranny of the rich and the powerful, were the subject matter of his novels, though he had paid no small attention to the lower middle class and their trials and tribulations. His works awakened the conscience of the reading public to the stark realities of the situation. The impact of *Chamana Athaguntha* can be assessed from the fact that, while it was being serialised in the pages of *Utkal Sahitya*, a literary journal of repute, people in large number flocked to the court, to satisfy their curiosity to know at first hand, the punishment that would be meted out to Ramachandra Mangaraj—the usurious moneylender—a fictitious character of Phakirmohan.

The Victorian Novelists in English literature wrote to please that great middle class which between 1750 and 1850 gradually became the predominant force in England. Phakirmohan though almost a contemporary, employed the medium of novel, to lay bare the stark realities of human existence. He wanted not as much to regale the readers as to make them aware of the social situation. He was passionately committed to social justice: though not in the Marxist sense. His sympathy for the exploited and the downtrodden was inspired by his humanism and deep concern for the exploited.

Phakirmohan was a great master of type characters. He not only sketches personality with unparalleled vividness, but also understands the organic principles that underline that personality.

The structural technique of *Chamana Athaguntha*, though unconsciously evolved, is unique. The denouement of its plot has taken place on two levels; which merge into each other unobtrusively to create unity of impression. The structure of the novel has two levels--apparent and inherent. On the apparent level, it is the cruel story of the heartless expropriation by a ruthless greedy moneylender of the lands of an innocent couple of weavers. But on the inherent level, it is the pathetic story of a mother's yearning for a child. Saria, the weaver's wife was beguiled by Champa, a typical mischievous maid-servant, the mistress of Ramachandra Mangaraj; to believe that if she could construct a temple and consecrate it to goddess Mangala, she would be blessed with a child. Construction of the temple would be no problem, since the "compassionate" moneylender Ramachandra Mangaraj, would advance a loan for construction of the temple if they only agreed to place their land measuring six acres eight gunthas as mortgage. Bhagia, the weaver, under persuasion of his wife pining for a child placed his landed property under mortgage for construction of the temple. But what Bhagia and Saria got in return, was a pile of stones. The land was auctioned away for non-payment of loan, the moneylender even did not spare the cow, which in her mute responses, satisfied the

craving of Saria for a child. Saria died of shock and grief, Bhagia turned insane. Ramachandra Mangaraj was charged with murder of Saria and sentenced to six months of imprisonment. After release from the prison, he died a pitiable death. Though Ramachandra Mangaraj in his death-bed was constantly tormented by the vision of Saria and Bhagia threatening to kill him, Bhagia did not actually kill him. He only bit off his nose in a fit of madness. Class conflict and retribution in the hands of the exploited was not within the range of thinking of the writers and thinkers of Orissa, nay of India in the 19th century. Non-the-less Phakirmohan has meted out natural justice to Ramachandra Mangaraj, in his pitiable death, in the hands of a quack. *Manu* (The maternal uncle) is his third novel (1913) which presents a galaxy of well-drawn characters both urban and rural. In this novel, Phakirmohan has dealt with the corruption of the petty officialdom, which was then emerging as an influential class in Orissan society. H. E. Beales, who was at one time the Collector of Balasore, seems to have been deeply influenced by *Manu* in writing his novel "The Indian Ink". Nazar Natabar Das also meets the same fate as Ramachandra Mangaraj. Though *Manu* is considered by critics as an important work, its structure is loose and in effect does not make as much impact as *Chamana Athaguntha*. Phakirmohan also wrote two other novels, *Lachhama* and *Prayaschita*. While the latter was didactic and belonged to the decadent phase of Phakirmohan's creative genius, the second novel, *Lachhama* was historical.

Phakirmohan was the father of modern Oriya short-story. According to his autobiography Phakirmohan wrote a short-story, *Lachhamania* in the late sixties of the 19th century, which was published in the columns of *Bodhadayini*, a journal, which was being edited and published by Phakirmohan from Balasore, his native town. But that short-story—perhaps the earliest short-story in Indian literature—still remains untraced. Historians of literature have therefore relied upon *Revati* (1898) written by Phakirmohan, as the first short-story in Oriya. *Revati* symbolises the conflict between the dying old and the emerging new, in which process, Revati, an innocent

girl, fails a pitiable victim. The tragedy and pathos of *Revati* leave the readers deeply moved with pity. No anthology of Oriya short-stories is complete without *Revati*. *Randipua Ananta* (Ananta, the widow's son) is also another short-story which deserves mention in this context. Phakirmohan also wrote belles letters, essays and poems, but his undying fame solely rests on his novels and a few short-stories.

The masterpieces of contemporary fiction, one may note, have little humour: there are few jokes in them. But in Phakirmohan's novels they are abundant. Phakirmohan, though a serious writer, was the last great humourist in Oriya literature and in that he shared a common characteristic with Victorian Novelists of English literature. The secret of the survival and freshness of Phakirmohan's lies in his scintillating humour.

Though at places in his novels Phakirmohan used the heavy Sanskritic style, he employed the colloquial Oriya in his writings and gave them a new flavour. He demonstrated for the first time the beauty and expressiveness of the very language of the people. Though his two other distinguished contemporaries, Radhanath Ray and Madhusudan Rao employed the Sanskritic style, the colloquial style of Phakirmohan came to stay and influenced generations of prose writers. In that sense, Phakirmohan's contribution to the growth of Oriya language is outstanding.

Phakirmohan's times were a period of deep unrest and churning when the Oriya language was faced with extinction by manipulators in the administrative level. Orissa, then, was a part of the Bengal Presidency and not only the administration of Orissa, but also its social, cultural and economic life lay strangled in their hands. Phakirmohan was one of the early patriarchs of Oriya nationalism, who by his pen waged a relentless struggle, for the survival of Oriya, which was one of the ancient languages, with a developed literature, spread over seven centuries. Phakirmohan's colloquialism was inspired in this political and cultural context.

The Indian literature to-day is a Babel of tongues; writers in one language not knowing, what is being done in the other language. The Sahitya Akademi has signally failed in evolving an Indian Literature through translations of outstanding works in other languages. Its paltry efforts in that direction has not borne much fruit. It is no wonder therefore, Phakirmohan has not as yet found his rightful place in the history of Indian Novels.

The Orissa Sahitya Akademi, few years ago, formulated a scheme to translate Oriya classics into English and Hindi for making them available to a wider audience beyond the Oriya-speaking people. But due to paucity of funds and lack of necessary infrastructure, this project could not materialize. However, the Akademi is grateful to Prof. Dr. John Victor Boulton of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London for having undertaken to translate Phakirmohan's autobiography into English and make it available for publication. The Orissa Sahitya Akademi is grateful to him for his devoted labour.

In fact, Dr. Boulton could not have selected a better work in Oriya than the *Atmajeevana Carita* or Phakirmohan's autobiography into English. About four decades ago Prof. Priyaranjan Sen of Calcutta University wrote in his 'Modern Oriya Literature' :

"The Atmajeevan Charita or Phakirmolan's autobiography ought to be more widely appreciated than it is now, written in 1917, published in the form of a book in 1927, it is not only a reliable storehouse of information, but also in itself an attractive form of literature, unique in its kind in Orissa and not lacking intrinsic merit at that. Its style is simple, direct, and it admirably suits the narration. It is a book which richly deserves to be translated into other modern Indian languages of India, because it describes conditions at a highly interesting period of transition, when western influence was casting its spell upon the Indian web of life—the action of the influence being more or less similar in the different provinces of India;

and also because it is the life-history of a man of chequered career, which by itself constitutes a major attraction". (Modern Oriya Literature by Priyaranjan Sen, published in 1947, Page : 103-104).

I am happy to note that the English version of the autobiography of Phakirmohan, the Father of Oriya novels, will not only bring a unique life and career to the notice of a wider public, but also will present his life and times in an authentic manner.

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Unit - 6

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Surendra Mohanty
President, Orissa Sahitya Akademi

INTRODUCTION

Phakirmohana's *Atma Jivana Carita*, the first autobiography in Oriya, was written c 1917 and was first published serially in a magazine called *Utkala Sahitya* from July 1918. Its author, Phakirmohana Senapati, was a distinguished Oriya man of letters, the first novelist of note in the Oriya language, and the founder of the modern age in Oriya literature. He lived from 1843 to 1918 and had a chequered career as an accountant's assistant and sail-maker in the ship-chandling and sail-making business of his uncle, Purusottama Senapati; as a clerk in the Government Salt Offices in Balasore; as a schoolmaster; as one of Orissa's first part-time journalists and printers; and finally as a dewan in a number of Orissa's Feudatory States. The first things Phakirmohana wrote were routine text-books and translations, then mediocre verse, but finally in 1896 after his retirement at the age of 53 he began to write novels and short stories, beginning with a satirical masterpiece, *Cha Mana Atha Guntha*, which first appeared as a serial in *Utkala Sahitya* in 1897. It is primarily on his prose-fiction that Phakirmohana's reputation now rests.

Phakirmohana's autobiography is not an intimate document, but rather a public statement partly on his times but mainly on his career. Of his private life he says little and of his creative writings he says disappointingly even less. His main aim seems to be to skip over the bare details of his birth and upbringing as quickly as possible and embark on the more amusing and intriguing details of his varied life. At times he seems playfully satirical, as in his treatment of Radhanath Ray, his great rival for distinction in Oriya literature, and in his account of his first contact with missionaries and Europeans, but on the whole his tone is serious, matter-of-fact, and forthright, setting the record straight on his handling of affairs, condemning bigotry, hypocrisy and extravagance in Hinduism, and poking mild fun at the follies and foibles of feudatory kings.

Students of Oriya literature will, of course, find in the life of Phakirmohana an intrinsic fascination, but for social scientists and general readers the interest will lie not so much in Phakirmohana's life as in the events he witnessed: the Great Orissa Famine of 1865-66; the founding of Orissa's second indigenous Press in 1868; the language dispute with the Bengalis in 1869-70 from which Oriya nationalism evolved; and the administration of the Feudatory States, which are inhabited largely by tribals. Phakirmohana supplies much valuable first-hand information on these topics, and it is my pleasure to present it to readers of English.

There are enormous debts of gratitude which I must acknowledge. Firstly, to Professor Cora du Bois from that other Cambridge, USA, for first encouraging me to undertake this translation. Secondly to SOAS colleagues like Professor J. C. Wright and Ralph Russell for reading the manuscript and making useful suggestions. And finally, and indeed most importantly, to the President and Secretary of the Orissa Sahitya Akademi. The President, Shri Surendra Mohanty, the distinguished Oriya novelist and critic, has added immeasurably to the book's value by adding a chapter of his own assessing the importance and achievement of Phakirmohana in Oriya literature. And the Secretary, Shri Chintamoni Behera has borne all the headaches of seeing this work through the press. My gratitude to both is beyond words.

Should anyone's appetite for Phakirmohana remain unsatisfied after reading the translation, he might care to read one or other of the following additional writings on Phakirmohana by myself, by which I tried in my own small way to bring him to the attention of a wider audience:

'Religion in Contemporary Indian Literature with special reference to Phakirmohana Senapati in Orissa', in *South Asian Digest of Regional Writing*, Vol 3 (1974), Heidelberg.

'Autobiography in Oriya 1917-1970', in *South Asian Digest of Regional Writing*, Vol 5 (1976)

Nationalism and Tradition in Orissa, with special reference to the works of Phakirmohana Senapati,' in *Tradition and Politics in South Asia* edited by R. J. Moore, Vikas, 1976

Phakirmohana and his times, Orissa Sahitya Akademi, 1976.

Deśa kāla, pātra O maniṣī Phakirmohana, Orissa Sahitya Akademi, 1976.

Phakirmohana Senapati: his life and prose-fiction,
unpublished Ph. D. thesis, London 1967.

John Boulton

SOAS

NOTE ON SPELLINGS

I have throughout opted to avoid the use of diacritical marks by giving, where possible, the spellings of Indian words and place names as found in standard English dictionaries and on maps. These spellings conform to an Anglo-Indian pattern, once current throughout India and now being slowly modified. My policy in regard to personal names has been simply to transliterate them without diacritics. Indians from outside Orissa will, I feel, have no difficulty in providing a rough approximation of their pronunciation. And since I felt that for the average Westerner the presence of diacritics would prove more alarming than enlightening, I simply omitted them.

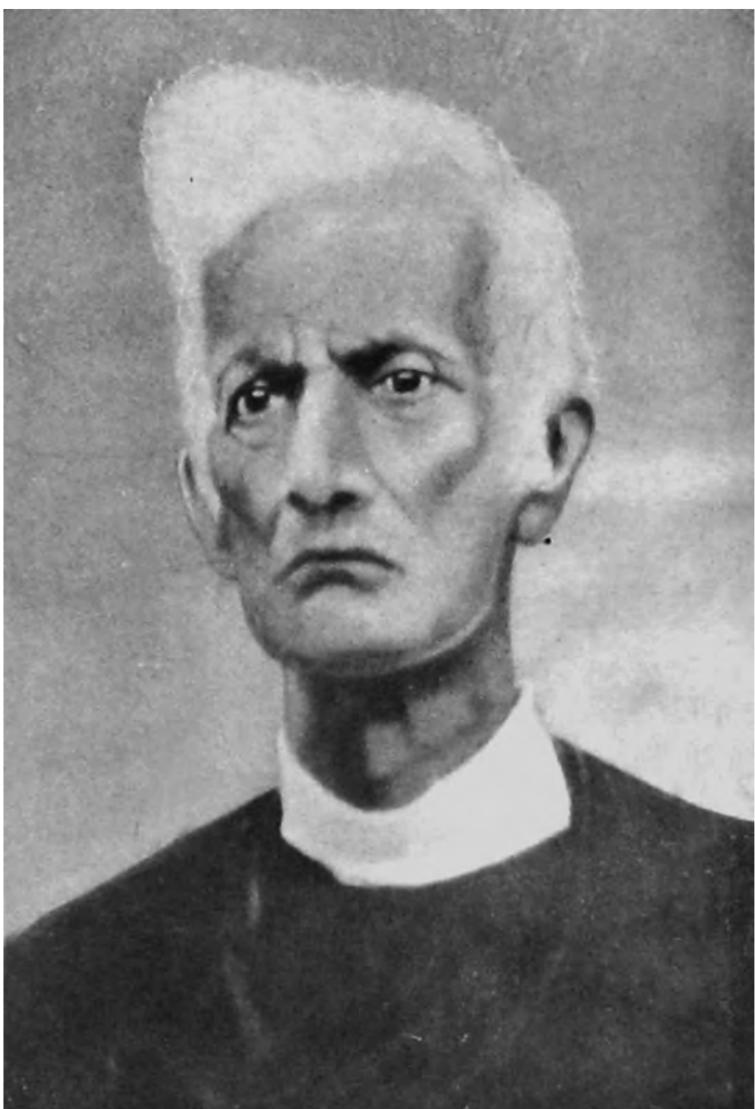
John Boulton

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

For the last four or five years, a number of friends and educated young men, for whom I entertain a paternal feeling, have been pressing me to write my life story. I do not find it easy to ignore their pleas; for the Oriya language is remarkably lacking in biographies; though, unfortunately, my own life is equally remarkably lacking in the kind of weighty matter that merits a biography. Furthermore, I am remarkably lacking in the seductive art of so setting down my tale as to fire prospective readers with any enthusiasm to peruse it. In fact, for the temerity, with which I embark upon this present enterprise, I have only one excuse to offer: I am firmly convinced that the not-too-distant future will find this sacred soil of ours teeming with autobiographers. All I want to do is to provide a path for them.

Phakirmohana Senapati

1917



CHAPTER 1

MY FAMILY TREE

I am descended from a one-time powerful Khandayata family which once held a Chowpadhi—a village fort of the peasant militia and possessed much rent-free land in the village of Kusinda in Kendrapara, a subdivision in the district of Cuttack, though our possessions there are said to have been gradually eroded during Maratha rule.

The first of my ancestors to move to Balasore was Hanu Malla. When young, he had enlisted with the Marathas as a foot-soldier. His job was to guard the Phulbar pass against the pathans. As pay he was granted nine hundred acres of tax-free land. He was then the commander of a large number of foot-soldiers, who also held tax-free land in lieu of pay. Their descendants continued in undisputed possession of these lands until the first settlement in 1843, by which time some of the families had died out. Those who could still produce deeds were confirmed in their ownership, whilst those who could not lost possession.

There is an amusing story of how our family came to lose their property. When the Honourable East India Company occupied Orissa in 1803, my grandmother, Kuchila Dei, was a young widow with two small sons, one two years old and another four.

According to Granny, the Company troops approached Balasore from both south and east. The moment they reached Balaramgarh, at the river-mouth east of Balasore, the villagers fled for their lives, leaving all their possessions and taking with them into the forests only their relations. Peace was shortly established. Assured by the Company that no harm would come to them, the villagers returned home. Lots of them had fled in such terror that they had

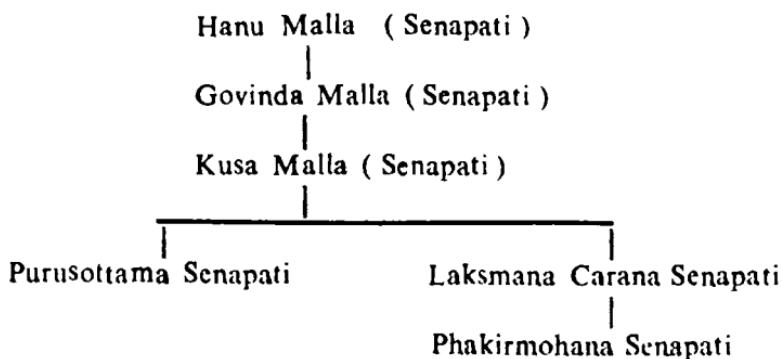
not even stopped to shut their doors. On their return they found their backyards loaded with ripe fruit, for everyone had been so afraid for his life, that no one had had time to think of stealing.

I heard as a child from old eye-witnesses that at the close of Maratha rule the country was so beset with anarchy that no one dared display in his home gold, silver, and bell-metalware, or even brass, for fear of thieves, bandits and the Naga mendicants. Ordinary people were poverty-stricken and cowed. Compared to those times we are now in paradise.

Some months after the East India Company had established its good government in Orissa, it was proclaimed that people were to be allowed to retain the property and possessions they had enjoyed under the Marathas. All that was required was that property-owners should present themselves at the Government offices on a pre-determined date and register their deeds with the Collector. Most owners failed to turn up, either because of fear or because they failed to understand the Government proclamation. So foot-soldiers with warrants were sent to escort them there. One came to our house. Granny was then a young widow. Seeing the soldier, she turned for advice to the villagers, who in their stupidity concluded that the Company was sending for Maratha-sympathisers in order to kill them. Scared out of her wits, Granny lay her two boys in a corner, covered them with a mat and called through a crack in the door : 'We have no male children in this house. We have no need of land.' The villagers backed her up, so the soldier went off and our family lost its lands.

The title conferred on Hanu Malla by the Marathas was 'Senapati' ('General'). His unworthy descendants forsook their family name Malla and though landless and armyless, have continued to use the title 'Senapati' ever since. Only during offering oblations to the ancestors and at similar other religious functions do we take the name 'Malla'.

My relationship to Hanu Malla is shown in the following family tree :



CHAPTER 2

CHILDHOOD

I was born in the village of Mallikaspur, Balasore, on the day the sun passed from Sagittarius to Capricorn in January 1843, or 1250 of the sana era. My mother's name was Tulasi Dei and my father's Laksmana Carana Senapati.

I have heard that at birth my left ear was pierced and a gold ring inserted. I had had an elder brother named Caitanya Carana. He had passed on before I was born. There was a superstition that when an elder son died, the next son should have his ear pierced at birth, because then Death would disdain to take him away. In my childhood I met hundreds of others with similarly pierced ears.

When I was seventeen months old, Father went to Puri to see Lord Jagannatha's Car Festival. He was attacked with cholera and died at Bhubaneswar on his way home. He had been accompanied by a number of fellow-villagers and his mother, Kuchila Dei, my granny. Granny told me that Father died on the stone steps of Bindu Sagar, a tank near the temple in Bhubaneswar. People wept when news of his death reached the village. Father had a pet dog. It too began moaning in harmony with the general lament, and continued to do so after the others had ceased. It kept sniffing around all the places Father used to visit in the village and all the spots where he used to sit. After fretting for eight whole days without touching food, it died.

On hearing of Dad's death, Mother took to her bed and never left it. For fourteen months she suffered intense mental and physical anguish and then died on the eighth day

of bright fortnight in the month of Bhadra (August-September) in the year 1252 of the Sana era i.e. 1845 A.D.

Loneliness had been my lot ever since. Many of my male contemporaries, whom fate had spared such loneliness, and who had enjoyed considerably better health and luck than I, have quit this world before me. Yet I, fatherless and motherless, the constantly ailing, survivor of a variety of near misses, am sitting here setting down on paper with a hand enfeebled by age, the paltry tale of my long life. Who was it, I wonder, who ordained that this should be, and by whose grace and favour did it come about ? The meanest blade of grass is not created without purpose. What purpose was it, I wonder, that prompted God to keep me alive so long ?

After my parents' death, as if at the Lord's command, my grandmother, Kuchila Dei, began nursing me. We have a local saying : 'If mother doesn't raise them, dad's mother will'. It saddens me to recall even dimly how my grandmother struggled and suffered to save me, for I was, alas, unable to repay even a fraction of her kindness to me.

After my mother's death I was confined to bed for seven or eight years with disagreeable maladies like diarrhoea and piles. Granny watched over me day and night, for what must have been months and years — for much of the time without food and sleep — as if in an eternal tug-of-war with Death who hung on tenaciously to one of my hands, whilst she pulled the other. Finally she triumphed, and I began to convalesce.

While I was ill, Granny sat by my bed and prayed to every God and Goddess under the sun to save me. There were two Muslim saints in Balasore. Finally she turned to them and vowed, 'I'll make my boy Vraja your *fakir* or (slave), provided he gets well'. I had at first been named Vrajamohana. Granny now named me Phakirmohana (i.e. Fakir-mohana), giving me this Muhammadan name to please the Muslim saints.

The illnesses ceased : I survived. But Granny could not bring herself to give me to the Muslim saints completely : only symbolically for the eight days of the Muharram each year. For those few days I used to dress up as a *fakir* in knee-breeches, a high-necked, multicoloured coat, and a Muslim cap, with a variegated bag hung on my shoulder and a red-laquered cane held in my hand. Thus attired and with my face smeared in pure chalk I would roam through the village morning and afternoon begging from house to house and in the evening I sold whatever rice I had collected and sent the money to the saints for their offerings.

CHAPTER 3

STARTING SCHOOL (1852)

I would have been about nine years old when I first started school. There was a primary school in each of the big villages in Balasore, and one to every two or three small ones. The well-to-do engaged private tutors. The children of untouchables also attended school, though they sat a little away from the caste children.

At that time teachers used to come to Balasore from Cuttack, especially from the pargana (fiscal division) of Jhankada. Caitra (March-April) was the time for importing teachers. You could always tell a candidate for a teaching post from his clothes. They wore a washed piece of cloth, to below the knee, yet another soiled napkin wrapped round their heads, and put across their shoulder a double-bagged knapsack in one of which would dangle a brass pot, large enough to boil a pound of rice, and a small light water-vessel, and from the other two or three palm-leaf manuscripts and a garment about nine cubits long. These were the marks of the Abadhana or the itinerant teacher seeking a job. You would see them wandering up the village street from the middle of Phaguna (February-March) to the end of Caitra (March-April).

The majority of teachers were Karana by caste, but a few were Mati-vamsa Ojhas. Teachers from Balasore belonged to the astrologer caste (Jyotisa). Mati-vamsa Ojhas were famed locally for arithmetic. They were reputed to know the *Lilavati Sutra*, a treatise on mathematics by Bhaskaracarya. I heard as a child that they could compute the leaves on a tree or the feathers on a flying bird.

These teachers did not teach in Balasore district alone : their sphere of activity also included the near-by feudatory states and Kanthi, Mahisadal, Pataspur, Haripur and Dantun in Midnapore district.

Midnapore district covers a total of almost 5,200 square miles. Of these about 2,200 in the south are inhabited by pure Oriya-speakers. Oriya used to be the medium of their conversation, legal documents, accounts and private correspondence. It was also used to some extent in the Midnapore district *Kacheri*. Clerks used to be appointed to Midnapore *Kacheri* at the chief *Kacheri* in Balasore. This practice has now virtually ceased.

Even now in the houses of influential villagers in the places I have mentioned Jagannatha Dasa's *Bhagavata*, Sarala Dasa's *Mahabharata* and the Oriya *Ramayana* continue to be read each evening. A female relation of the zamindar of Pataspur had a verse translation of the Sanskrit *Bhagavata* made. It is still read in some localities. Hundreds of manuscript-reading brahmins earn a desultory living there reading these texts. Many of them are retained by zamindars and money-lenders. But now-a-days English-educated gentlemen in those parts feel embarrassed about speaking Oriya. Yet they are not finding it easy to drive our national language from their homes because of their womenfolk.

The complete disappearance of traditional Oriya primary schools from South Midnapore makes an intriguing, yet sorry tale. Sometime between 1865 and 1870 a Bengali Subinspector was appointed to set up government schools there. He tried to found Bengali-medium schools, but people refused to have their children taught Bengali. So despite much effort, the Subinspector failed. The sole purpose of his appointment was to set up schools in South Midnapore. Failure meant dismissal. He had no intention of losing such a good job by confessing his failure to his superiors.

Desperate situations sharpen wits. The Babu soon hit upon a plan. Visiting each police station in turn, he got the

station superintendent to summon all the Oriya primary teachers in his precinct to present themselves at the station on a predetermined date. He showed them all a counterfeit warrant written in English and stamped; then said: 'Look, these are the instructions of the District Collector for Midnapore. All the Oriya primary schools in this precinct are to be closed and all the Oriya primary teachers are to return home within seven days of hearing this warrant. Any teacher seen in the district of Midnapore thereafter will be arrested and sent to the chief *Kacheri*, where he will be both fined and imprisoned.' The Subinspector toured from police station to police station, proclaiming these instructions to primary school teachers. Poor timid teachers are not noted for their courage. These were, after all, the District Collector's instructions and they had been issued by the police. The teachers fled for home as quickly as they could forsaking their schools for ever.

Needless to say, the Subinspector afterwards had little difficulty in setting up his Bengali schools? His elder brother was Headmaster of Balasore District School. We were close friends. He told me the story as an illustration of his brother's cunning and ability.

Though the people of South Midnapore now read Bengali at school, within the family they speak Oriya for it is no easy matter to abandon one's mother-tongue. They get the Oriya *Bhagavata* of Jagannatha Dasa and a few other Oriya books printed in Bengali script and read them at home.

Every single thing in the primary schools was according to rules. Offenders were inevitably punished. No pupil could sit or stand, unless told to by the teacher. When our legs ached through sitting in the same spot, we had to ask the teacher politely; 'Sir, one ?' i.e. 'May I urinate'; 'Sir, two ?' i.e. 'May I defecate ?' 'Sir, five ?' i.e. 'May I have a drink of water ?'

Here are a few of the punishments meted out in traditional Oriya primary school :

1. caning.

2. standing on one leg.
3. standing holding one's nose in one hand and hair in the other.
4. kneeling with the left hand on one's head and a stick of chalk in one's outstretched right hand.
5. a rope is prepared from the stalks of palm leaves. It is about one and a half cubits long. It is put round the nape of the offender's neck and noosed round his big toes. This is called *Madhwa Shankuli*.

After school each day the pupils were given 'naught pupil'. The teacher and monitor—the best pupil in the class—made a mental note of the time of arrival of each boy. When it was time to go, all the boys lined up in front of the teacher with both arms outstretched, palms uppermost and placed together. The first arrival received a tap on the palms from the tip of the teacher's cane. That was 'naught'. From then on the strokes increased one by one and crashed down on the boys' hands, two, three, four, and so on till the last boy; i. e. the second arrival received two strokes, the third three, the fourth four and so on. Not all the strokes were applied with the same force. There were whacks and taps. The teacher used to look to see who was next. Any likelihood of parental repercussions slackened his hold on the cane, whose swishing was, however, clearly audible in the case of other pupils.

If a boy overslept and awoke to see by the sunlight on the roofs outside that time was getting on, he did not go to school that day for fear of the cane. Instead he made for a safe spot such as the kitchen and sits inside holding the fringe of the cooking pot. But there was no escape for him even there. A few boys from the same caste would slip off their clothes, enter the kitchen, and carry the truant bodily into the school, where the teacher would instantly cane his back a few times.

I started attending a school such as this. We had arithmetic in the morning and read manuscripts in the afternoon. After school the other boys went home, but I had to remain behind to wait on the teacher and help prepare his meals. His name was Vaisnava Mahanti, and he came from Cuttack district.

My uncle Purusottama Senapati was very cruel to me. At the end of the month when the teacher came for his salary, my uncle said, 'Why should I pay you' ? You're not teaching the boy anything'. 'But I am with him day night. I don't let him waste a moment in play', replied the teacher. 'Look', my uncle said, 'there's not a mark on his back'. The teacher took his point. I was sitting in the school room. The teacher gave me about ten gratuitous cuts across the back with his cane. The swish of his cane and my cries of distress delighted my uncle and aunt, but Granny came dashing up to the teacher, crying, 'You've no call to hit the boy, Schoolmaster. Have you no children of your own ?' A repeat performance of this was put on each time the teacher was paid.

Some time later Vaisnava Mahanti returned home. An Oriya school was held in Nanda Goswami's monastery in the village. I was admitted there. There were holidays on the day of the new moon and on the first, eighth and fourteenth of each lunar fortnight. On each of these days we elder boys banded together and spent the afternoon singing to the village women who gave us rice for the teacher. The teacher lived on this rice. Sometimes he got more than he needed, in which case he sold it and saved the money. He used to get lots of other quantities of rice besides this. He received an offering each time a pupil started a fresh subject. The usual offerings were either a seer of rice, a betelnut, some molasses, some flowers, or some puffed rice.

There was then a free persian school in Balasore. When I had finished primary school, I got myself enrolled there of my own accord. The staff consisted of three Muslim teachers and an Oriya Pandit named Vanamali Vacaspati.

The teaching was limited to how to correspond with one's father and brothers and how to appeal to the law-courts.

There were then no printed books in Oriya except the Bible and no printing presses in Orissa except the Cuttack Mission Press. The missionaries ran a school in Balasore. Only the Bible was taught there. No Hindu children would attend for fear of losing caste by reading their printed book.

CHAPTER 4

SAIL-SEWING AND THE SALT INDUSTRY

In Balasore in my boyhood shipping was a thriving industry. There were between five and six hundred ships in commission. Three quarters of them were salt-carriers and the rest transported commercial goods to Madras, Colombo and islands in the Bay of Bengal. In those days in Balasore steamers were unheard of.

Seafaring ships were then sail-driven. A ship needed between six and twelve sails, whose shape and size varied according to the ship's design. Each sail had a different name.....like *Savara*, *Karaju*, *Tavara*, *Kalami*, *Jivi*, *Daria*, *Pela* etc. Some of the sails were square, some triangular and some oblong. The size of the sails was determined by the design of the ship. If the sails were too large, the vessel might capsize in a high wind. If they were too small, it would be permanently becalmed. To fit a ship with the right sails took experience and expertise.

My father and uncle were contractors for most of the ships. Most ship-owners ordered their sails from them. They retained hundreds of tailors to manufacture sails. It was a lucrative business. We had an office to keep the accounts. Uncle apprenticed me to the accountant as a 'Mate'. My duties were to tour the quays morning and afternoon and find out which ships were being fitted with what sails and which tailors were doing what, so that the accountant could record the information. This work occupied only a fraction of my time, so Uncle also set me on sewing sails.

The Balasore shipping season was from *Kartika* (October-November) to *Caitra* (March-April). When the south winds were high, ships were unable to leave the river-mouth

and remained at their moorings till *Kartika*. So work ceased. Nevertheless, everyone in the *Banksal* area, i.e. where the ships were made sea-worthy, owners, artisans, contractors, boatmen, sailors and office-workers included, earned enough during the six-month shipping season to tide them over the off-period. During the rains, when salt production was suspended, workers in both the Government and private sectors connected with salt were also idle.

When the shipping trade declined, Uncle took me to stay with Visvanatha Dasa, Head Clerk of the Government Salt Offices (*Nimaka Mahala*), who lived in a village close to ours called Bhuisahi. I used to go with him to the *Kacheri* each day and began learning all about the operations of the Salt Offices.

Compared to the other Offices in the *Kacheri*, the Salt Office was more important. Lots of clerks were employed there. The Offices comprised two departments: one handling rural accounts and the other urban.

Whatever pride and prosperity Balasore then possessed were due to the salt manufacture alone. Solar salt was manufactured all along Balasore's eastern seaboard from the mouth of the Subarnarekha in the north to that of the Dhamra in the south. Most of the excess salt, after Balasore's own needs had been met, was shipped to the entrepot at Shalimar on the west bank of the Ganges near to Calcutta, whence it was despatched to be sold in the rural villages of Bengal. Many people in Bengal used then to deal in Balasore solar salt. For the inhabitants of Balasore town, the salt manufacture was virtually the sole source of livelihood.

To ensure the safety of ships at sea, hundreds of Brahmins were employed to worship the town's deities and to recite the *Candipatha*; and to ensure the continued prosperity of the salt industry, each year before the production of salt was resumed, a ceremony was held for Jhareswar Mahadeva on behalf of the Government, whose exchequer

bore the whole expense of it. All the people in the salt industry were Hindus, so the Government did this to humour them.

So there I sat in the Salt Offices, beginning to learn the business. *Kacheri* business was conducted in three languages : Oriya, Bengali and Persian. Most unfortunately, however, the Government shortly issued orders to wind up the industry : Lady Luck left Orissa for Liverpool and elsewhere. When the Salt Offices closed down, the Bengali staff returned to Bengal and the Oriyas were absorbed into other departments of the *Kacheri*.*

As a port and business centre, Balasore had achieved fame in both India and Europe. European merchants from Holland, Denmark, France and Britain had established trading posts there before moving on to Bengal. But no one's fortunes run smooth for ever : ups and downs are a law of Nature. From time immemorial the quaysides of Balasore had bustled with people by the thousand. Yet look at them now, silent, desolate, overgrown with wild bushes and as hushed as the cemetery. Even the river has silted up. The whole of Balasore's business is now in the hands of non-Oriyas.

* In 1862-66 Government definitely abandoned a system (viz. Salt manufacture) which from its first establishment by Lord Clive, in the shape of a pure monopoly, had lasted with various modifications almost a century. (Buckland's Bengal P. 287)

CHAPTER 5

STUDYING AND TEACHING AT BARABATI SCHOOL (1862-64)

When the Salt Offices closed down, I began attending a school founded by the Second Master of Balasore Government School, Babu Sivacandra Soma. It was in the village of Barabati on the north-eastern edge of Balasore town. One of the teachers was a pandit named Harekrushna Panigrahi. His teaching method may be exemplified as follows :

"One day a crow sat on the branch of a tree holding a piece of meat in its beak; i.e. one day or in the course of one diurnal time-span, a crow or a corvine avis, sat or became sedent, on a branch or a ramus, of a tree or arbor, holding or supporting, a piece of meat or a segment of animal matter, in its beak or orifice." *

In the examinations at the end of the year I came top and was promoted, but I had not been in the higher class for more than four or five months, when I had to stop going, because we could no longer afford the monthly fee of four annas.

I did not remain idle long. The School Secretary, Babu Sivacandra Soma, sent for me and gave me the post of Third Master on a monthly salary of only two and a half

* The point was : Panigrahi was teaching a highly sanskritised form of Oriya, the so-called *Sadhu Bhasa*; and was doing so by substituting Sanskrit words for ordinary Oriya ones. In the above translation latinate vocabulary is used in place of Sanskrit. (Translator)

rupees. Granny was delighted when she heard about the job. My salary stayed at two and a half rupees for only two months. Then it was raised to four.

In those days the pay scales for clerks in the civil courts ranged from three to ten rupees per month. Only the Head Clerk was on a salary of ten rupees. People were well-off on these meagre salaries, as the cost of living was then low: e. g.

Rice	one and a half maunds for a rupee
Oil	seven seers for a rupee
Ghee	three seers for a rupee
Fish	upto two seers for a pice
Pulses	(from which dal is made) were about one maund for ten annas.

Office workers and the well-to-do wore fine Balasore cloth. Agricultural workers in the country wore home-spun clothes. Only people with no womenfolk to spin for them bought cloth from the bazaar. In the country everyone grew their own cotton. When it had been picked, the head of the family distributed it among the womenfolk to spin into yarn, for each woman had a spinning wheel of her own. Then the weaver wove it into cloth at a pice a cubit.

At the end of each month the Deputy Inspector for Schools used to come and test the children. There was only one Deputy Inspector for the whole of Orissa. Balasore town was his headquarters. He went to inspect the schools in Cuttack and Puri only twice a year. It was said that in the whole of Orissa he had under him no more than seven or eight schools.

I studied grammar and lexicon with the school pandit. But it was beyond my meagre intelligence to understand the aphorisms of the *Mugdha Bodha*. My study of Sanskrit was made much easier later, when Vidyasagar published his *Vyakarana Kaumudi* in four volumes and his *Ruju Patha* in three.

CHAPTER 6

KAVIBARA RADHANATH RAY (1863)

While I was teaching at Barabati, a pupil from Balasore District School was sent to Calcutta to sit for the Entrance Examination. His name was Radhanath Ray. Kavibara Radhanath Ray was the first pupil to pass from Balasore district. When word of his success reached Balasore, it caused a stir in the *Kacheri*. All the clerks got together and said : 'An Entrance Pass is nothing special, it seems. Our Sundar Babu's young rickety lad's got through, so it can't be all that difficult'.

So Radhanath, whose father Sundar Narayan Ray, was a clerk in the *Kacheri*, was sent to Calcutta to study for his F.A. (First Arts), accompanied by his uncle Jahnavi Babu, who was to look after him. Even brave people feared to go to Calcutta in those days. No one dared go alone. One needed at least six or seven companions. To walk from Balasore to Calcutta took six days and was most unpleasant : the roads were knee-deep in mud in the rains and knee-deep in dust in the hot season, and in winter it was so cold, your teeth chattered. Then there were botherations of cooking in the wayside inns and tyrannical ferrymen to contend with. And to top it all, there were thieves and dacoits.

Between Calcutta and Bhadrak the danger from thieves and dacoits was great. Robberies took place daily. The road was infested with bands of dacoits. The most notorious in Balasore was the band led by Sardar Gadei Kandara. He had roughly sixty or seventy dacoits under him. They scoured the roads between Ranigunge Calcutta and Cuttack on the lookout for rich wayfarers and merchants. When Gadei got wind of any, he sent out his underlings to rob them. He finally retired from banditry, when he made a haul of fifteen to twenty thousand rupees from a merchant.

He spent his last days in pious deeds like a holy man, listening to the *Bhagavata Purana*, revering gods and brahmins, and donating to worthy causes.

In addition to Gadei's, there were also a few smaller bands and besides those there were plenty of petty thieves near villages. These petty thieves would lie in wait by the wayside after dark. Their occupation was stealing from bullock-cart passengers. The driver would be sitting up front, dangling his legs, dozing and driving the bullocks, and his passengers would be comfortably bedded down in the back on hay, when, spying his chance, the thief would cut the matting door at the back of the cart and make off with whatever he laid hands on. The crunching sound of cut matting was drowned by the creaking of the moving cart. The passengers were sound asleep. They did not realize a thing till the morning when the theft was discovered. This sort of thing used to happen every day.

Many of the wayside shopkeepers were either dacoits themselves or their accomplices. They lived two or three miles away from their shops. They came in the morning, spent the day selling to wayfarers pressed rice, rice, cooking pots and fuel etc. and returned home at nine at night. There was some kind of drug in the turmeric they sold. Wayfarers who had eaten curry prepared with it fell unconscious, and at midnight dacoits would come and rob them of all they had.

Lower-class people from Orissa have been going to Calcutta to do small jobs for long. On their way home with their earnings after two or three years stay in Bengal, they were often robbed. So they used to return in groups of twenty-five to thirty. They were nevertheless sometimes robbed. There used to be a saying :

"If you escape the turmeric paste and get past Narayangarh, you will see your relations." The Narayangarh region was then thick with thieves.

There was another breed of brigands scouring the roads and committing dacoity all over India from the foot of the Himalayas to Cape Camorin. These were known as Thugs. They originated in the west and operated from mid-September to mid-June. They would not hesitate to murder for as little as one rupee. The British eradicated them. In my childhood I saw a Thug imprisoned in Balasore. In many districts thousands were imprisoned. Some were transported, some even hanged. Not only Thugs were imprisoned though. Some other people were imprisoned for life for having bought a couple of pence-worth or stolen goods from them. It was, I presume, to eradicate the Thugs that these stringent measures were enforced.

Radhanath was fifteen or sixteen when he passed the Entrance Examination, but he was so thin and weak, that he looked no more than a lad of ten or twelve. Arriving in Calcutta at dusk, he and his uncle Jahnavi Babu took lodgings for the night. When they got up the next morning they took their water-pots and set off to find an open space to defecate. After roaming all over the place without finding one, they became absolutely disgusted with Calcutta. 'This is a confoundedly wonderful city, I must say, they despaired.

Sundar Narayan Babu was an ordinary clerk, and his salary was small. He could not afford to keep his son in Clacutta for long, so after a few months Radhanath Babu returned to Balasore, where he successfully studied for his F. A. at home.

CHAPTER 7

WORKING AT BALASORE MISSION SCHOOL (1864-71)

The post of Headmaster at Balasore Mission School fell vacant. It carried a monthly salary of ten rupees. The School Secretary, Rev. A. Miller, appointed me to that post in 1864. The post of Second Master also became vacant. My good friend Govindacandra Pattanayaka was appointed on a salary of seven rupees.

Miller Saheb was tall, handsome, well-built and slightly plump. His faults were a quick temper and a lack of common sense. He did the first thing that came into his head. Because of the shortage of Christian teachers in those days, he appointed us Hindus, but he had no faith in us. In his opinion Hindus were another form of the idolatrous devil, mendacious, mischievous and untrustworthy. He had not mastered Oriya and knew nothing about running a school. Whenever I made a suggestion about the school, he flew into a rage and issued orders to the contrary. His uncalled for anger did not frighten me though. On the contrary, his outlandish Oriya and weird gesticulations amused me. I just silently moved away.

In those days at the Balasore Mission School for Girls they used to employ a Pandit named Visvanatha Satpathi. He was as learned as he was versatile. He could compose extempore verse. The Mission School and the Girls' School were housed in the same large bungalow, separated by a mere partition wall. The Girls' School was attended only by Christians. Hindus were afraid to send their daughters there for fear of losing caste. There was a grown up girl named Sarada at the School. One day for some reason I wished to see her. So I sent a note to Visvanatha asking him to send her round. He replied back in Sanskrit scribbled on

the back of the note..... “unwilling is she to come to thee/because she is shy.” Still holding the slip of paper in my hand, I went up on the veranda and called him. ‘Come on’, I said, when he appeared, ‘finish off the couplet quickly. You can hardly call yourself a poet on the strength of this line.’ Extemporising there and then, he replied:

“ With bosom high and buttocks heavy
hair as lovely as clouds,
always adorned in nectars
of a smile, unwilling is she
to come to thee
because she’s shy.”

One day Pandit Visvanatha was absent. It happened that day to be the Muharram Festival of the Muslims. The Secretary, Miller Saheb, sent for him the following day and asked, ‘Why didn’t you come yesterday, Pandit Visvanatha ?’

Pandit : ‘I couldn’t come yesterday because I was unwell, Sir.’

Saheb : ‘Liar, you went to the Muharram. You are fined one rupee.’

Pandit : ‘But, Sir, I’m a Hindu brahmin. How could I offer the Muharram *Puja* ?’

Saheb : ‘You idolators are all alike.’

Despite the one rupee fine, we were greatly amused by the Saheb’s ignorance. It kept our friends laughing for a month.

The Saheb and his brethren visit remote rural areas to preach the Gospel in markets and other public places. Immediately upon his return to Balasore, a criminal suit was usually filed against him. The suit ran : the Saheb and his brethren stood in a public place in the market and first of all sang a hymn to an English air at the top of their voices. The people in the market-place gathered round, attracted by the weird tune. Not even an educated man, let alone the small stall-holders and wayfarers, could understand the

hymn's meaning. When it was over, the Saheb delivered a sermon (in broken Oriya) :

"Your Jagannatha is wood, Brothers, is stone, is nothing. Worship of him leads to eternal damnation. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour. If you worship Him, you will find the light and take your place in His heavenly kingdom".

'No, Saheb,' some fool blurted out, 'our Jagannatha is good, your Christ is no good !' The Saheb lost his temper. 'You idolatrous Hindu rascal !' he cried. 'You've blasphemed our Lord Jesus Christ !' He was holding a riding crop in his hand. He lashed out and struck not only the blasphemer of Christ, but also whoever happened to be standing in front. Immediately on his return a criminal suit was filed against him.

The Saheb imagined he knew Oriya well. After several days' toil he produced a rough-and-ready Oriya translation of a slight pamphlet. It had been arranged that, once the translation was finished, I should correct it. It would then be perused by the Mission Head, and, if approved, printed. Accordingly I was given the manuscript and started correcting. As I recall, the first sentence ran : 'There are many people in the world who do not believe there is a god in the world.' My version of this was : 'There are many people in this world who reject God's existence (*astitya*)'. When I had finished the correcting, I returned the manuscript to Bhikari Bhai, the Mission Head, but since he could not read handwriting, I had to read it aloud to him.

He flew into a rage at the very first sentence. 'What ?' he bellowed. 'What's that you've written ? God's bones : Is the Lord God made of wood and stone like the images of idolators that He should have bones ?'

I gaped at him in bewilderment, and he kept on and on explaining to me that the Lord God was boneless. 'Excuse me, Sir, but where have I written anything about bones ?' I asked gently.

'Right here. *Asthi*. **Asthi* means bones. D'you think I don't know that?' He snapped at me and then reported angrily to the Saheb. "The Pandit has ruined your pamphlet with his blasphemies, Brother."

In the Saheb's estimation, Bhikari Bhai, the Mission Head, was a learned man for he could haltingly read the (Oriya) printed Bible. What was more, he was a Christian, and therefore reliable. I, on the other hand, was an idolatrous, mischievous Hindu and therefore untrustworthy. The Saheb did not ask me for a single word of explanation. He just raged at me. He did not address a civil word to me for a long time afterwards. I have no idea what finally became of his pamphlet. The American Mission Society severed all connection with him when the criminal suit was filed against him. But he did not remain unemployed for long. Bignold Saheb, then the District Collector of Balasore, wrote to the Government and got him appointed as Deputy Collector. He died within a few months of his appointment, however.

I began teaching Bengali to the temporary Collector for Balasore, Mr. R. H. Posey, and the Joint Magistrate, Mr. Mayers, who lived in the same house together. Hoping to improve my prospects, I asked them to give me a Government job, whereupon Mr. Posey appointed me Munshi in the Collector's office in Balasore. When, however, the Rev. E.C.B. Hallam arrived as Secretary of the Mission School, I resumed my former post.

The Reverend Hallam was a learned and talented as he was handsome. He was gentle of both speech and nature. His Oriya was exceptionally fluent. His intonation and accent were exactly like ours. He sounded just like an Oriya. To facilitate the study of Oriya by Englishmen, he composed a grammar of the Oriya language in English. I helped with its preparation. That is why he mentions my name in his book. I differed from him on only one point

* The Mission Head understood *astiva* (existence) as *ashi* (bones). Hence the confusion.

of grammar. We were in complete agreement on all others. It was his contention that Oriya has no separate Dative case. He argued that since the inflection of both the Accusative and Dative was *ku*, there was no need to distinguish the Dative. His grammar therefore omitted it.

A new scheme at this time was introduced whereby in the Oriya and Bengali grant-aided schools in Orissa pupils passing their final examination were to be given a monthly scholarship of four rupees and taught English for a period of four years. During the year of its inception, four of our pupils passed from Balasore Mission School. Three of them were awarded scholarships of four rupees. My eldest son-in-law, Raghunatha Caudhuri, was one of them. Balasore Mission School came first in the whole of Orissa. The appreciative Hallam therefore raised my salary to twenty-five rupees a month.

In Civilian circles and educated Indian society the then Balasore District Collector, Mr John Beames, was famed to be an extraordinarily learned man with proficiency in eleven languages. He was engaged on his *Comparative Grammar of Indian Languages* and, whilst writing this quinquilingual opus, required a scholar versed in three languages, Bengali, Oriya, and Sanskrit. My benefactor, Hallam Saheb, took me to meet him. He asked me a few grammatical questions and, receiving answers which accorded with his expectations, incorporated them in his grammar. I suddenly became known among Europeans as a scholar : 'In a treeless region even the tiny castor oil plant is regarded as a tree.' Beames told me to come to see him at least once a week. Sometimes when I was a day or two late, he would ask, the moment he saw me, 'What explanation have you to offer for this delay in coming to see me ?' Our talks were invariably linguistic, though ranging over such topics as, Sanskrit couplets, Bengali prose, the Oriya *Rasa-Kallola*, and snake and witches' charms.

There was then a controversy going on between Bengalis and Oriyas. Bengali officers and senior clerks feared

me because I enjoyed European favour. Virtually all the junior officers and better-paid office-staff in Balasore were then Bengali.

Beames strongly supported me in the promotion of female education in Balasore and in the preservation and enrichment of the Oriya language. Whenever I landed in a scrape, it was invariably Beames who rescued me. Indeed, that magnanimous man was the taproot of all my worldly success. I shall remember his sacred name to the last moment of my life. He always told everyone I was a patriotic scholar.

The headquarters of Mr. R. L. Martin, the Inspector of Schools in the South-west Division of Bengal, was in Midnapore. When he went down to Cuttack to inspect the Orissan schools, he found that the post of Second Master at the Normal School was vacant and wrote asking if I wished to apply for this post, which carried a salary of thirty rupees, adding in a postscript that, should I be appointed, I should definitely have to go to Cuttack: i.e. once appointed, I should not be able to decline to go. Hallam Saheb was then touring Jaleswar area, north of Balasore. I went there and consulted him. He refused to let me go and raised my salary to thirty rupees. That stopped my going to Cuttack.

On my way back from Jaleswar I had no sooner reached an inn called Basta about sixteen miles north of Balasore, when I took fever. By morning chicken pox had broken out all over me. I came the rest of the way to Balasore in a hired palanquin. I arrived home at dusk and sat weeping at my bedroom door. Granny came and said tearfully : 'You don't have to go to Cuttack, if you don't want to. The Saheb had no call to hit you.' 'He didn't hit me,' I said. 'I have got chicken pox. I'm all in. Make my bed quickly. I want to lie down.' When I later asked Granny why she had spoken as she did, she replied : 'I dreamt last night the Saheb hit you. Your body was all swollen and you were sitting weeping on the door-step at dusk just as I had dreamt it.'

CHAPTER 8

A TERRIBLE FAMINE IN ORISSA (1866)

I was working at the school with happy, joyful enthusiasm due to the sympathy shown me by the Reverend Hallam. He often discussed literature with me after school. He was very kind and, even though my superior, treated me as a close friend.

The number of converts was increasing day by day. One of the main causes of the increase, of rather the particular cause, was the Great Orissa Famine. This hair-raising event took place in the ninth regnal year of the King of Orissa (1866 A.D.). The horror of it still lurks in men's minds. Three million people died and almost a third of the population was wiped out. Those who survived trauma, were scattered away hither and thither.

I was twenty-three at the time and Headmaster of Balasore Mission School. Though a good fifty years have now elapsed, the memory of those days remains vivid in my mind. In August there had been one good downpour, which lasted for four days. Then from mid-September onwards people were anxiously looking at the skies for clouds. Rain had become their sole topic of conversation. From mid-October their despondency became extreme. It is no good now, even if it did rain. The paddy crop was perishing. Paddy is Balasore's sole crop. People's lives depended on it. It had gone shrivelled and straw-like. Some was half-grown and some fully-grown, waved in the wind like slender white whisks. People left the cattle to graze on it, but the cattle just sniffed it a few times: then went away, without touching it.

The day-labourers sold their brass and bell-metal pots, what few they had, and managed for as long as they could. By

mid-November they took to the roads, heading for where they thought best. They became separated from each other, wives from husbands and sons from fathers. They begged from door to door, but who had rice to give away ?

The peasants sold what they had, bell-metal, brass, cattle, silver and gold, according to their circumstances, and at first clung tenaciously to their homes. Oxen sold for from one to five small baskets of rice and cows for from one to two baskets. No one had scales to weigh silver and gold and no one had time to look for any. 'Who's asking prices ? Give me as much rice as you can for it.' Many middle-class people scoured the villages with money in their pockets looking for rice, but there was none to be had, for those who had any hid it.

By mid-February the majority of the peasants and almost all the artisans were scattered and chewing anything they could lay hands on. When the tender leaves came out on the tamarind trees, people swarmed up them like monkeys, ten to twenty to a tree to pick and eat the leaves. Everyone was just skin and bone with sunken eyes. Many young women, wives and daughters of good family, were roaming the streets wearing ragged, knotted saris, no more than a quarter the normal length. Their signs of motherhood, two flaps of skin, hung against their chests. Some had children in their arms, just skin and bone, with lips glued to those hanging skin-flaps. There was no knowing whether the children were alive or dead. From mid-March on the death-rate mounted. On the roads, the river-ghats, by bathing tanks and in the woods, wherever you looked, you saw only corpses.

I think Mr. Ravenshaw, Orissa's great friend and benefactor, had at that time been newly appointed as Commissioner. He received a communication from the Government in either September or October : there was every likelihood of famine in Orissa due to drought. Was there any need for Government action to safeguard its subjects ? If so, what action was feasible ? In order to prepare his reply, the Commissioner consulted the clerks in

in the *Kacheri*. The two *Sheristadars* said: 'There's no need for concern about possible famine. There is sufficient paddy stored away in the country in the homes of zamindars and dealers to last a year.' Seeing that the *Sheristadars* had already said this, the clerks and *Peshkars* felt it incumbent upon themselves to add to it, in order to please their chiefs. 'The zamindar of Gopalpur has ten granaries stored with three hundred thousand maunds of paddy', said the Commissioner's *Peshkar*. 'Besides which, he has silos containing thousands more maunds. One could also get at least two hundred and forty thousand maunds of paddy from Sama Sahu in Bhimpur. Besides which the small-scale dealers have granaries crammed with it. They alone could keep Orissa going for a couple of months.' The *Peshkar* of the political Department, doubling the figures, estimated that people had lakhs and lakhs of maunds of paddy in their homes; whilst the estimates of the clerks indicated that Orissa had unlimited stores of paddy and could manage a year. The Commissioner replied to the Government that there might be a short-fall in Orissa, but there were sufficient stocks of Paddy for one year.

The Commissioner made a great mistake. Before reporting to the Government, he ought to have made a thorough inquiry into how much paddy was stocked in Orissa, who held the stocks, and whether in the event of a general crisis they would sell or distribute them. Yet it was ordained by Providence that three million Oriyas were to be hurled into confusion and death. In view of this, was it likely the Commissioner would see sense ?

From mid-February on people began to die. Day by day the death-rate mounted. Wherever you went on the roads and riverghats, by the tanks, in the fields and woods, you found corpses, till gradually the whole country seemed to fill with them.

Rice was one rupee for ten seers. Once, though only for three or four days, it cost one rupee for three seers : even at that price it could not be had in towns.

Three or four days later, when rice arrived from Rangoon, the price came down again to one rupee for ten seers. The year before the famine the price in Balasore weights had been one rupee for either one hundred and fifty seers of paddy or one maund of rice; which explains why it was so catastrophic when, during the famine, the amount per rupee fell to ten seers. Even that applied only in towns : in the country rice was unobtainable, for those who had any hid it, mostly in holes under the floor.

By March or April the Commissioner informed the Government of the true state of affairs in Orissa and requested them to send large quantities of rice and paddy. The Government, recalling, we presume, the Commissioner's earlier letter telegraphed, 'You telegraph to send rice, but rice can't be sent by telegraph'.

The present Calcutta trunk road was then a mere dirt track trailing through jungles infested with thieves and dacoits. Sending rice and paddy overland was therefore out of the question. After the closure of the Salt Offices Balasore's seafaring families had faded away. Our only hope therefore lay in steam ships. We had heard of them in Balasore, but had never actually seen one. Government somehow managed to hire some big vessels in Calcutta and began despatching rice from Bengal and Rangoon and opening scattered relief centres.

As soon as the news of 'relief centres', reached the rural areas, starving wretches came racing to the towns. For a fortnight to three weeks they had not so much as seen food. They had kept alive on tender leaves and inedible roots and fruits. They were in no condition to cover such distances : over two thirds of them died on the way. The remainder reached the relief centres only to gorge themselves and die, some of dysentery and some of cholera. Their stomachs had shrunk. When they saw rice, they gobbled as much as they could, but their digestive systems had gone : they could no longer cope with so much.

There were doctors ready to take care of these shrunken-stomached wretches. In order that for the first few days they could be fed on sago, the Government had imported sacks and sacks of it and stored it in warehouses at the relief centres. But it was all in vain. They almost all died.*

Early each morning from around the relief centres and from elsewhere on the highways and byways about the town sweepers picked up the previous day's dead, piled them on carts and tipped them into the river. For a month to six weeks I saw sweepers take three or four cart-loads to the river each day.

After supplying the relief centres, the Government arranged to sell the remainder of the imported rice to the general public at one rupee for ten seers. Not just anyone could buy as much as he liked, however. Members of the Relief Committee sold to particular people tickets for from one to ten seers. Then on production of these tickets people collected their rice from the warehouse.

Since nothing in this world lasts for ever, the famine also ended. The following year there were adults and children of both sexes wandering the streets with nowhere to go. They had been outcasted by Hindu society for having eaten at the relief centres. The Christian missionaries lovingly lifted them up into their arms, cherished them like sons and educated and trained them. Is not Hinduism responsible for this unjust abandonment? The Hindu mythologies and scriptures plainly state that in an emergency it is permissible to accept cooked food even from the lowest untouchable. The *Mahabharata* records that for the sake of survival Rajarsi Visvamitra once ate the flesh of a dog cooked by an untouchable, but afterwards resumed his seat among the venerable Sages. The responsibility for this abandonment rests with our callous society.

CHAPTER 9

BALASORE'S FIRST PRESS (1868)

Whilst teaching at the Mission School, I did my best to promote and enrich Oriya literature. First of all, I wrote a book in prose called *Rajputrara Itihasa* (History of the Rajputras). There was then only one single press in Orissa, the Cuttack Mission Press. I wrote to them and found that to print my book would cost four hundred rupees. This was beyond my means, so I abandoned the idea. Then with Ishwarachandra Vidyasagar's permission I translated his *Jivan Carit* (Biographies) from Bengali into Oriya and got it printed by the Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta. It was selected as a text-book for the scholarship examination. Then I wrote a grammar and an arithmetic book, both of which were also used in schools.

We started a society for the promotion and promulgation of literature. Its members were :

Babu Jayakrisna Caudhuri
Babu Bholanatha Samantaraya
Babu Govinda Prasada Dasa
Babu Damodara Prasada Dasa (Secretary and Treasurer)
Babu Phakirmohana Senapati
Babu Radhanath Ray

The society resolved to print all our old poetical works, starting from the *Rasa-Kallola*. Proceeds from sale of this work were to finance the printing of further books. To raise the cost of printing the *Rasa-Kallola*, a company was to be formed and shares were to be two rupees each.

When after three or four months' hard work we had raised a capital sum of two hundred and fifty rupees, we started on writing the commentary to the *Rasa-Kallola*, continuing each

evening from seven 'o'clock till nine. Even before its completion, the Society realised that after the publication of the *Rasa Kallola*, unless we had a press of our own, we should not be able to finance further publications, until all the copies of the *Rasa Kallola* had been sold. Much time would therefore be lost. With a press of our own, however, we could print several books at once. A Printing Company had already been formed in Cuttack. We decided to form one in Balasore on similar lines. Work on the commentary to the *Rasa Kallola* was therefore suspended and the money we had collected for its publication remained with the treasurer; which he did not return.

Our decision to found a press was reached in 1868. It was to be called 'P.M.Senapati, and Co., Utkala Press'. Shares were to be five rupees each. Four members of the society, including myself, set about raising capital for the Company. Some people bought shares because they realised the press's significance, others in the hope of profit, and many because of our dogged persistence* in asking them to. After four or five months of continuous effort, one thousand two hundred rupees had been raised and deposited with the treasurer.

No one in Balasore then knew what a press was or how it worked. As we could not afford to bring in printers from Calcutta, I sent my cousin Jagannatha there to learn the trade. For a whole year I sent him fifteen rupees each month for expenses. The money came out of my own pocket, not Company funds. We asked Jagannatha to let us have as soon as possible a full list of what was needed for the press and a note on how much it would all cost.

The apparatus for the press began arriving by Balasore ships. From Calcutta to Balasore by sea took from ten to twenty days depending on the winds. Finally Jagannatha arrived with the types. The total expenditure then stood at eight hundred rupees, leaving a balance of four hundred rupees, and a press still to be bought. We learnt from inquiries that a press could not be had for less than seven

•or eight hundred rupees. It looked as if all our efforts were in vain. There was a missionary press in Midnapore. I wrote to them asking whether they had a press going cheap. They sent one within four or five days in a bullock cart even before the answer to my letter. I think they charged us about one hundred and fifty rupees.

In the middle of Motiganj Bazaar in Balasore my family owned a brick-built house, which they used to let. We decided to set up the press in it, so I hired it from Uncle, and Jagannatha, our printer, began assembling his apparatus there. To operate the press we also hired six hands and asked Jagannatha to train them.

It was joyfully proclaimed that printing would commence. Half the shops in Motiganj Bazaar closed. Even the town's most prominent people came to watch the process of printing. The crowds in front of the printing press filled the road and brought the passage of pedestrians to a standstill. The types were set and placed on the press. A wooden rule was rolled over the types applying the ink. The paper was put in place. Hundreds of people looked on with bated breath. The print was now to emerge from the press. But what was this ? Not a single letter was printed. The paper was just blotted with blobs of ink. The printer stood stiff and crest-fallen. The world looked black. I could hardly speak for shame and disappointment. I felt unutterably miserable. Then from a hundred and one directions the question burst upon me : 'Where's the print ?' 'The paper is only inked today.' I managed to reply with some difficulty. 'Afterwards the ink will turn into letters., Afterwards we came to know, the Mission Press of Medinipur had discarded it as it had become unserviceable. It was decided that this junk was useless for printing. Now another press had to be brought from Calcutta. Otherwise all the expenses and efforts extending over years would go in vain. Such a machine would cost eight hundred rupees. Wherefrom we would get it ?

One trouble invites another. It was mid-June and very hot. I had been on the go day and night. What with the worry,

the irregular meals and the lack of sleep, I developed dysentery. I passed blood eight or ten times a day. The prolonged bending over the machine to repair it and the constant exertion sent the sweat pouring from me. My clothes were wringing-wet with it, and the flow of blood behind, wet my clothes and dripped on to the ground. I fainted when I got home. I used to return from the press at nine 'o' clock at night and often fainted the moment I got in. Rather than tell people of my condition, I talked gaily about the press, forcing myself to carry on. Throughout those dark days I was determined either to set up a press or die in the attempt.

When one strives with disinterest and dedication in some good cause, God lends a hand. Kisoramohana Dasa, the brother of Madanamohana Dasa, one of the leading zamindars and moneylenders in Balasore, was a true friend and helpmate to me. He lent me eight hundred rupees, the moment I asked, without even taking an I.O.U. I ordered a Super Royal Albion press from Calcutta. It was then the rainy season and in Balasore sea-traffic was at a standstill. The press had therefore to come from Calcutta by bullock-cart. The Jagannatha Road (the road from Calcutta to Puri) is metalled now, but it was only a dirt track then and during the rains became impassable. Loaded bullock-carts were frequently immobilised by the mud. To extricate them labourers had to be fetched from near-by villages. The cart carrying our press got stuck in the middle of Dantan Bazaar. It took fifteen to twenty labourers eight days to get the cart properly moving again. Even so, the press reached Balasore twenty-two days after leaving Calcutta.

Our trials and tribulations were now over. The newly recruited men had learnt the trade, and we were producing excellent print in both Oriya and English. One day the District Collector of Balasore, Mr. Bignold, sent for me and gave me his delighted congratulations. As an encouragement to us, he also placed a large order for printed forms for the *Kacheri*. The handsome profit from that order gave us a good start.

The first two or three months people flocked from far and near like pilgrims of the Car-Festival in Puri, to see the Press. Rural zamindars used to come in palanquins. From the first day till several months afterwards, the citizens of Balasore swarmed to watch us. This may seem surprising now that printing is so common-place but when the first press was set up in London, even the King and Queen visited the works to witness the strange event.

Then one morning, six months after the opening, the works were visited by Orissa's great benefactor, Mr. T. Ravenshaw, accompanied by the Collector, Mr Bignold, and Bignold's successor, Mr John Beames. They inspected the press, listened to a brief history of its establishment and gave us a gratuity of ten rupees. Instead of pocketing the money, however, we deposited it as two shares in the Company and after the Company's dissolution returned it to them with profits, a sum of thirty rupees.

One of Balasore's leading businessmen, Babu Madanamohana Dasa, invited a large number of people to his home to celebrate the Durga Puja. Babu Radhanath Ray and I were also present there. Bringing me out in front of the assembly, Radhanath Babu said : 'The way you established the Utkala Press should be chronicled in letters of gold.'

The Press was running well and making plenty of profit. Cuttack Printing Company had begun putting out a weekly, *Utkala Dipika*. This prompted our Company's Executive Committee to decide to publish a fortnightly journal, *Bodhadayini ebam Balesvara Samvada-vahika*. The *Bodhadayini* section was to be a literary magazine and the *Samvada-vahika* a newspaper. Though the journal was launched, contributors were scarce. Teaching all day and running the press left me too tired to do much in the evenings. So the journal appeared irregularly, and of the forty or fifty subscribers, only eight or ten paid.

CHAPTER 10

GRANNY'S DEATH (1867)

At five o'clock one afternoon in late May or early June 1867, Kuchila Dei, my granny died. She was almost seventy-four years old. God had, I think, kept her on earth till then to look after me. Now that I could look after myself, she needed to stay in this troublesome world no longer.

My grandfather, Kusa Senapati, had been employed in some humble post, either doorkeeper or chief peon, in the service of the Nawab of Murshidabad, and had died there, leaving granny alone with two small sons.

Granny was of medium height, fair-skinned, well-built, healthy and able-bodied. She retained all her teeth, and almost half her hair remained black right up to her death. She was of a calm disposition and simple nature. Her conversation too was calm and gentle. She was never heard to raise her voice. There were a number of quarrelsome widows living in the village. Whenever they started quarrelling, granny retired to her room and bolted the door from inside. My aunt and her daughter-in-law were somewhat sharp-tongued and overbearing. When either of them began shouting abuse, granny withdrew; or, if they had hurt her feelings, she would hide in a dark corner of her room and weep. No one ever saw her have a really good laugh. Constant melancholy clouded her features. Very devout and god-fearing, she performed every single penance, spending most of the year fasting or on a limited diet. She regarded it as sinful to travel on the shoulders of the cow i.e. in bullock-carts. All her pilgrimages were therefore made on foot. I had never seen her laid up with anything but filarial fever, which troubled her every three or four months.

She was up before dawn and doing her work till midnight. Except when unavoidable, she never spoke to anyone lifting her face. But for her midday prayers after her bath and her bead-telling and listening to the mythologies in the evening, she was busy with housework all day long and at night was the last to eat and retire to bed. She slept for only three or four hours and so lightly that the least sound in the house or a single call would awaken her.

She possessed but three bamboo baskets : a small one filled with various roots and medicaments; the second with various kinds of garden seeds; and the third was very large. It was the receptacle of all the broken household junk. Nothing was ever thrown out. She used to nurse any child who fell ill, whether in our house or in the village. Behind the house there was a small grove. When she got any spare time, she used to work in it with a gardener. The garden was always filled with seasonal fruits and vegetables. We never needed to buy any from the market. Granny has passed away, but her mango grove still stands in the garden.

She dedicated her life to the drudgery and service of the household. Father's death was a great blow to her. The memory of how she suffered to save me is almost unbearable : the nights she nursed me day in day out, month in month out. No matter what she was doing, she always had an eye on me, like a cow on her calf grazing in a field. I must have been twenty or twenty-two, when I first went to Calcutta. It was dusk, when I returned. When she saw me, she went dashing about the house, veranda and yard, weeping with joy. It is due to her absolute self-sacrifice that I am alive today. Whatever headway I have made is due to her religious merit (*punya*). Her death was one of the most desolating events in my life.

CHAPTER 11

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS OF THOSE TIMES

To popularise the Oriya language, the Committee I spoke of, decided to establish schools in the rural areas. The first of our targets lay six miles west of Balasore, the village of Remuna, long famed in both Bengal and Orissa for its Gopinathji Temple, where Chaitanya had stayed on his way to Puri. On this occasion almost the whole Committee came accompanied by Babu Srinivas Bhattacharya, the Deputy Inspector for Schools, and an old class-mate of ours, Babu Nandakumar Bhattacharya. We set up the school near the Kayastha hamlet in Remuna and appointed Nandakumar Babu as Headmaster. We estimated that running costs for two teachers, a servant and sundry expenses would be about twenty-five rupees a month. Raja Vaikunthanath De (later Maharaja) agreed to finance it and paid me with a whole year's running expenses in advance, three hundred rupees.

To the South of Motiganj Bazaar in Balasore lay a tank called Garagaria. It was actually part of the village of Bateswar, where most non-Oriya teachers and clerks lived. A Deputy Munsiff (a lower grade judicial officer) also sometimes stayed there. Clustered around this tank were the homes of my friends and myself : the famous poet Radhanath lived a little way to the east of it : Babu Madhusudana Dasa, now M.A., C.I.E., then was the Third Master of Balasore District School. He had lodgings near by : and my home stood a little further away to the west. In the summertime we used to meet almost every day on the brick stairs of the tank to chat and get a breath of fresh air. Though afraid to be seen with us for fear of his father, Radhanath occasionally joined us after dark. But Madhusudana was a regular member of our

group. We boggled at the high ambitions he entertained even at that early age. He resigned his post and moved on to Calcutta.

I had a desire to learn English, I got hold of a copy of the First Book and began studying it by the tank with the help of friends, one of whom was the Second Master of the District School. After a few days tuition with the aid of the dictionary I read some English books, *The Arabian Nights*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Bengal Peasant Life* and the Bible. Later in my career this smattering of English came in very handy,

A conflict was then in progress between the Oriyas and the Bengalis. Bengalis held all the higher, non-European posts in every single Government department in Orissa. Their sole aim was to abolish Oriya and introduce Bengali in their departments. Whenever a post fell vacant, they strove to get a Bengali appointed. The Public Works Department and the Postal Department, for example, were closed as far as Oriyas were concerned. By common consent the leader of the Bengali community in Balasore was Babu Vrndavan Candra Mandal of Chunchuda, then the most powerful zamindar in Balasore district. Though generous, intelligent and courageous to a fault, he was bad-tempered and a terrible tippler. Spirits were his constant companion and without a bottle and glass by his bed sleep evaded him. The community of the Bengali Government employees, looked upon him as their guardian. His *Kutchery* became a meeting place for the Bengali Babus from six O'clock till nine each evening. The main item on their conversational agenda was how to drive Oriya from Government offices and introduce Bengali.

By speeches at public meetings, by writing articles in the *Samvada-vahika*, and by violent arguments, I became the principal enemy of the Bengali community, who henceforth ceased calling me by name and referred to me only as 'bastard ringleader'. I was the sole Oriya member of the Barabati School Committee. The other six members were Bengali. One day a meeting was called, which I failed to attend.

'Either Phakirmohana be excluded from this Committee, or I resign,' declared Vrndavan Babu, throwing the Committee into a deliberate quandary. The School was entirely financed by subscriptions. The numbers of Bengali and Oriya subscribers were equal. The resignation of Vrndavan Babu would terminate subscriptions from the Bengali community and the exclusion of myself would sever all Oriya connexion with the School. The dilemma was resolved by Vrndavan Babu's undertaking to finance the School himself. The Committee therefore told me to go. Thereupon the Oriyas ceased subscribing. For a few months the School carried on, financed by Vrndavan Babu, but when he stopped payment, it closed.

It was reported in the Government *Gazette* of the following week that I have been appointed as a Member on the Committee of the Balasore District School. A few days later I bumped into the School's headmaster, Srinath Datta. 'There's no getting the better of you, Sir,' he remarked (in Bengali) with a smile.

There was another occasion for the Bengali Babus to feel embarrassed. I had written the History of India, in two parts. It was selected as a text book for the School scholarship examination. The Inspector of Schools and the Commissioner rewarded me rupees seven hundred and rupees three hundred for that book. At that time, I learnt through the study of the Bible and various other books, and by talking with European missionaries, that the world was the creation of one supreme God, whose Son, Jesus Christ, was the saviour of our souls. Eternal damnation attended those who were not baptised in the name of Jesus. I began to think, since God created us, He would save us provided we worshipped Him. But who are these gods and goddesses? Every village has a deity, in every temple sits a god. How could I worship so many gods? They could not save me, so what was the point of worshipping them? I told Radhanath. For a long time we considered what to do. Finally we decided to embrace Christianity, but in the event Radhanath declared that he could not forsake Hinduism, and I did not have the courage to become a Christian alone.

Some time later a Brahma preacher named Isan Candra Basu came to Balasore from Calcutta. I made his acquaintance and we began daily discussions on religion. After a while he switched from religion to language and tried to prove the excellence of Bengali and the inferiority of Oriya. This greatly angered me, so I stopped seeing him.

Much later a new Bengali clerk named Prasanna Kumar Caturya came to the Salt Offices in Balasore. Hearing that he was a Brahma, I went to see him to talk about Brahmanism. Each Sunday evening a Brahma service was held in his lodgings, which stood behind the temple of Jhareswar Mahadeva, separated from it by a narrow alleyway. After the ceremony spirits were served. Indeed, for some Brahma spirits had by then become part of the ritual. At that time in Bengal, even the most venerable of the Brahma savants, were not immune to the temptations of liquor.

" We decided some months later to establish a separate Brahma temple openly. The regular congregation consisted of members of our Association, Damodara Prasada Dasa, Govinda Prasada Dasa, Jayakrsna Caudhuri and Bholanatha Babu, though a few other friends occasionally attended services. It would be during the summer of 1867 or 1868 that we began holding services in a brick-built house on the western edge of Motiganj Bazaar belonging to the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj and known locally as the Royal Buildings. Up till then most people had not even heard of Brahmanism. Some prominent people were surprised to hear a Brahma community had been started. 'What's Brahmanism ?' people asked. It caused quite a stir in the *Kacheri*. 'This is that devil's doing (i. e. Phakirmohana's)', they concluded. 'He's already ruined his family name. Now he's out to finish his caste.'

CHAPTER 12

MY MARRIAGES (1856 and 1871)

At the age of thirteen on the instructions of my uncle, Purusottama Senapati, I married Srimati Lilavati Devi, daughter of Narayana Parida of Manikakhumba. My first wife died when I was twenty-nine years old. She was cruel, conceited, sharp-tongued and disobedient. My aunt saw to it that our marriage was one continuous quarrel. This deadly domesticity occasioned me more pain than my prolonged childhood illnesses. It called to mind that old Sanskrit saying:

“A man whose mother is not at home
And whose wife is sharp-tongued”
May as well live in the jungle,
For jungle and home are the same to him.”

My one consolation was Granny. When she died, home-life became unbearable.

My first wife fell ill. After a year it became evident that the illness was incurable and death was certain. In order to ensure the best possible care and attention, her parents removed her to their own home, and there she died. I was staying in Puri at the time. My first wife left me only a daughter.

Fearing that unless I remarried, my family name might be extinguished and my ancestors deprived of offerings, a female relative of mine, solicitous of my welfare, talked me into allowing her to look for a second bride for me. The bride selected was Krsnakumari Dei, daughter of Siva Prasada Caudhuri, Head Clerk in the Criminal Department,

and sister of Prasanna Kumar Caudhuri, Head Clerk in Customs. We married in the summer of 1871.

To deliver me from all domestic trouble and distress and to improve my fortune, comfort and property, merciful God sent me Krsnakumari as a wife. She possessed all the virtues in full measure : truthfulness, loyalty and piety. To tend and serve me and to obey my command, she deemed her highest duty. At the time of our wedding she was eleven years old. She died in 1894, leaving me a son and a daughter : an empty world and a life without comfort.

CHAPTER 13

DEWANI IN NILGIRI (1871-75)

(AGE 27-33)

Krsnacandra Mardaraja, then the Raja of Nilgiri—a feudatory State—was without an heir. When a son was born to his brother, Harihara Bhramarabara, the Raja decided to adopt the boy, but later changed his mind. The result was a dispute, which grew gradually serious. The Raja began tyrannising his brother : he frightened away his servants and cut off his allowances, thus inflicting hardship upon him. Driven beyond endurance, his brother repeatedly complained to Ravenshaw, who was finally prompted to attempt a reconciliation between them. The Raja's attitude rendered reconciliation impossible. This infuriated Ravenshaw, who discovered upon investigation, however, that the apparent cause of the dispute was the Dewan, Damodara Mahapatra. The man was therefore relieved of his post.

Thus the Dewani of Nilgiri fell vacant. I was recommended for it by John Beames, the Balasore District Collector, and appointed to it at a salary of a hundred rupees a month by the Superintendent of the Feudatory States in October 1871. The Raja received me warmly and gave me charge of his whole domain.

For a year things went swimmingly. I went home every Saturday. There were two ways of travelling the eleven miles from Nilgiri to Balasore : one was to go east for about four miles and then join the main road at Sergarh; and the other was to go slightly north along village lanes and across fields. In the rains the fields became a morass, making travel by horse or palanquin difficult, so I went by elephant.

Zigzagging along ridges between fields in the rains turned the four miles from Nilgiri to Sergarh into six. I would, I decided, ease travel considerably, if a straight road were built from the Fort to the main road at Sergarh. I commenced work on the project. Half a mile from the Fort there was a wadi, which became unfordable when filled with waters from Suncot Hill during the rains. The surrounding area was densely thicketed. This and the proximity of the hills made the path dangerous at this point because of bears. No one went that way after dark, for immediately after sunset bears and wild boars descended from the hills to forage near the village. I had all the thickets cleared and a stone bridge built over the wadi: and also managed to complete the first three miles of the road, though not without difficulty, because of the stony, undulating ground and the extreme laboriousness of removing from it immense sal tree roots.

Nilgiri did not possess a single market. To buy necessaries one had to send either to Motiganj Bazaar in Balasore or to Remuna six miles to the north. Two or three times a week a few widows from Sahaji market in Remuna used to bring vegetables to sell at the Fort. A grocer once even opened a shop. But the Raja's clerks and attendants took things on credit and never paid up. So the man lost his capital and left. To improve things I opened a market in the mango grove on the eastern edge of Sankara-khunta tank. In honour of Her Royal Highness, the Rani of Nilgiri, I called it Nirmala Market. From up to ten miles around people used to come to buy and sell. The time I am speaking of is almost forty years ago now, yet Nilgiri market is still well-known throughout the State itself and also in near-by Balasore and Mayurbhanj.

In Balasore fifty or sixty years ago the cultivation of such things as European peas and cabbages was unheard of. No one knew whether a potato was a vegetable or a fruit. I started growing cabbages and things and managed to lay a flower garden at the Fort. I also planted mulberries and began making silk, though only a couple of cloths had been woven by the time I left Nilgiri. To explore the possibility,

whether tea would grow, in Nilgiri, I also started a tea garden on slopes in the hills. When I left, the bushes were only eight or ten inches high. So I did not have the chance to see whether my scheme came off. I am told that the cocoanut trees I planted are now bearing abundant fruit.

I was in Nilgiri for only four years. There were three reasons for my abrupt departure :

1. Levying subscriptions on tax-free land to found Sanskrit schools in Nilgiri,
2. A tenants' revolt due to an increase in taxes on stone-quarrying,
3. My supporting the Raja's brother in the matter of the adoption.

The former Rajas of Nilgiri had established some brahmin settlements. Being provided with sufficient tax-free land for their subsistence, the brahmin beneficiaries led lives of care-free ease. Their minds were completely innocent of scholarship. In the whole of the Raja's domains there was not a single brahmin who knew Sanskrit.

At the Raja's expense I set up a Sanskrit school near the Fort. Brahmin children living near-by began to study there, but it was not possible for children from outlying districts to do so. I estimated that if an annual subscription of two pice per acre was raised on all the tax-free endowments it would be possible to set up Sanskrit school in the outlying districts. I summoned all the brahmin beneficiaries concerned, informed them of my intention, and spent several days variously explaining to them the advantages of education and their obvious duty to educate their children in Sanskrit. Nevertheless, they rejected my proposal outright. Not only did they fail to realize the dignity of learning : they even suspected that this was a trick to levy taxes on tax-free land. 'This is not a subscription, but taxes,' they declared. If they gave two pice

today, tomorrow they would be assessed at one rupee. When all my various attempts failed, I concluded that it was ridiculous to try to convince ignoramuses of the benefits of learning. To collect the subscription, all that was needed was a slight show of force. I levied the subscription on the brahmin leader, auctioned his pony, and collected the money. I have no doubt that to coerce brahmins into educating their children was unconscionable. It resulted, not in the founding of Sanskrit schools, but in the uniting of every single brahmin in determination to ruin me.

In 1875 a serious tenants' revolt took place. About four miles south of the Fort there were two quarries, one called Visnupur and the other Talsajia. Both lay on the summit of Visnupur Hill. From the stone cut in these quarries, were manufactured household utensils such as plates, basins, tumblers and cups, that were fashionable in Bengal. Between twenty and twenty-five thousand rupees' worth were exported there each year. The stone was cut with chisels and mallets. The levy per mallet was six and a half rupees. The agent who collected this revenue and deposited it in the royal treasury was known as the *mahaldar* and his office as the *mahaldari*. The *mahaldari* was auctioned each year and went to the highest bidder. Each quarry was divided into sections. The leaseholder of each section quarried stone from it and manufactured utensils. Although the lease of a section was issued in the name of only one person, all the leaseholder's sons and brothers worked the section. Previous *mahaldars* had not objected to this. None of them, however, had paid into the treasury more than twenty-five thousand rupees a year. In the first year of my dewani a man named Kahnei Misra applied to take lease of the quarry for an annual sum of forty thousand rupees. He intended to raise the additional revenue, not by increasing the levy on masons, but by ensuring that it collected from everyone working the sections.

When Kahnei Misra became the *mahaldar*, no one but the actual leaseholder was allowed to work the sections. Sons and brothers, who had previously assisted, were now

prohibited from doing so. Leaseholders were therefore faced with heavy losses and, to top it all, Kahnei Misra began throwing his weight about.

It was Kahnei Misra's increasing high-handedness that brought the tenants to me petitioning for his dismissal. I could not accept their petition though, because I was afraid that his dismissal would result in stoppage of my getting the increased revenue. The tenants therefore denounced the authority of the Raja's government and openly rebelled. They were secretly egged on by the brahmans and some of the clerks.

Opening a fund they sent twenty to twenty-five of their number to Cuttack to complain to the Superintendent. Mr. Ravenshaw came to Nilgiri to investigate. He found the cause of the revolt to be the increase in revenue levied on the quarries. Further results of his enquiries were : for forming an unlawful assembly some rebel leaders were imprisoned for short periods; for oppressing the masons Kahnei Misra was relieved of the *mahaldari*; and for failing to control the tenants and to check the oppressions of Kahnei Misra, I was reprimanded.

I had been friendly with the Raja's brother, before coming to Nilgiri. The two brothers had quarrelled, when the Raja decided to adopt his own bastard (*phula bibahira putra*), Umakanta, in place of his nephew. One day the Raja called me aside and ordered me to make Umakanta his heir. 'According to clause twenty-five of the code governing the administration of feudatory states,' I replied, 'in the presence of a nephew, no bastard can become heir.' From that day on I was the Raja's enemy. It was no longer possible for me to stay in Nilgiri; so towards the end of 1875 I resigned and left.

CHAPTER 14

DEWANI IN DOMAPARA (1876-77)

(AGE 33-34)

After leaving Nilgiri I was absolutely penniless. Seeing no way of earning a living in Balasore, I decided to go to Cuttack, where my benefactor, the magnanimous John Beames, was then Collector. I felt certain he would find something for me. To get to Cuttack the required money; my wife raked up fourteen rupees, a few annas and a Jaypuri *mohar*. On the security of this gold coin, I borrowed money from a neighbour, Bhuyan Abdus Sobhan Khan, who was a Government pleader. Since I knew no one in Cuttack, I got Babu Sudama Candra Nayaka, later Ray Bahadur, to give me a letter of introduction to his elder brother, Babu Narayana Candra Nayaka, who was then in the Survey Department in Cuttack. I then prepared for my journey.

It was midnight and all was dark. My heart and mind were swathed in darkness too. Everyone but my wife was asleep. When I held office, lots of people used to come to see me off. Where were they now, I wondered. 'It's the position one reveres, Sire, not your person.' I went out and then looked back. A forlorn little female form stood motionless on the dark threshold. Before it stood the dak palanquin I had ordered. I set out. My eldest son-in-law Raghunatha Caudhuri, was studying for his F.A. in Cuttack College. His lodgings were in Chandini Chowk. I stayed with him there.

The post of auditor of the zamindaris of minors in Cuttack district was vacant. It carried a salary of seventy rupees a month. The magnanimous John Beames instructed

that I be appointed. I made inquiries and learnt that these small estates were scattered all over the district To audit them would mean a lot of touring. A palanquin, eight bearers and a cook would be indispensable. For their wages and keep alone, I should need sixty rupees a month. I informed the Saheb. He agreed with my calculations and wrote to the Board, asking them to raise the salary to ninety-five rupees.

Two and a half months later I was still awaiting the Board's decision. What little money I had had, was gone. That morning the cook reported there was nothing in the house for the evening meal. I did not know what to do. I did not feel like staying in, so I climbed the bund on the edge of the Kathayodi to the east of the Collector's *Kacheri* and sat gazing listlessly into the river. 'Hullo there, Phakirmohana', someone called from behind. 'What are you doing, sitting here all alone ?' I looked round and saw Babu Dvarakanath Cakravarti, the Superintendent of the Normal School. I respected Dvari Babu as I would an uncle, and he loved me as he would a son. 'Come along, Phakirmohana. It's time we settled up', he said.

'No, please excuse me', I replied, for I was feeling dreadfully sorry for myself and in no mood for accounts. 'I don't want to come to your place today'. He took my arm and dragged me off to his quarters at the Normal School. I sat in a chair on the School veranda. He came out and pushed twenty-eight rupees and a few annas into my hand, saying, 'I owed you forty-eight rupees. You took a gun for twenty. I've deducted that and there's the balance'. Four years earlier Dvari Babu had bought some copies of my *Bharatavarsara Itihasa* (History of India) from me. I had forgotten he still owed me something on that account.

Now that I had a little money, I began having a pleasant time. It would have lasted longer, if I had been more careful, but I was always extravagant. Providence did not ordain that I should be careful with money. I began running desperately

short and went to see my one hope and prop, the Collector. Our talk ran as follows :

Beames : 'I suppose you are unemployed whilst awaiting the Board's letter'.

I : 'Yes. Sir. I find unemployment hard to bear'.

Beames : 'Quite. Unemployment is worse than any illness. (He reflected for a while.)

Well, I should at least like to employ you as Dewan of Domapara. Would you be willing to go ?'

I : (I smile to myself. He asks, am I willing ? It's like being granted a boon before one has even prayed.

"Hey, beggar, would you like something to eat ?"

"Would I ? Just tell me where to sit".)

Yes, Sir. I am willing to go wherever you send me.

Beames : 'Then take the job. At least you'll get three months' rest. You're not to do a thing, you won't be able to. There's been a row going on between the Raja and his subjects for the last five years. I've been getting reports of various cases. You're to see to it, the situation doesn't worsen. That's as far as your duty goes. I've received an angry letter from the Government. Whatever happens, the trouble must be settled this year. One more thing : the Raja is mad. You'll probably have difficulty in getting your salary. I'll write from the *Kacheri* tomorrow and get you three months' salary from the Raja. You're to leave for Domapara as soon as you get it. I'll tell Jagamohan Babu. He'll quickly get the money for you from the Raja'.

(Jagamohan Ray was then Chief Deputy Collector for Cuttack district.)

In order to facilitate future discussion of the State of Domapara, I'll give an outline of the troubles referred to above. When the former Raja of Domapara, Purusottama Manasinha Bhramarabara Ray, died childless, the Government decided that the true heir was his nephew, Raja Raghunatha Manasinha Bhramarabara Ray. Raghunatha and his younger brother were then children, so the Government sent them to the Princes' School for Minors, which was in Calcutta superintendent by the famous Rajendralal Mitra. On coming of age the Raja took charge of his State. His lands had during the Court of Wards period been assessed by the Manager at moderate rents. In the meantime much additional land had been brought under cultivation and was now being enjoyed tax-free. The Raja wanted a fresh revenue assessment based upon a complete survey of his whole domain; i.e. to reassess on the basis of the prevailing rents, of all the estates in the proximity of Domapara : the feudatory State of Tigiria, the Government Estates of Banki and Khurda, and Naraj in the Moghulbandi. The tenants were unwilling to pay one pice more than in previous years, however. Their intransigence was the root-cause of the dispute with the Raja. They were now all united in revolt against him, led by the former dewan, Nidhi pattanayaka.

Orders were issued openly from rebel headquarters, prohibiting people from paying rent to the Raja, visiting his palace, working or performing for him the services of washerman and barber. The homes of law-abiding tenants, who refused to join the revolt, were raided and looted by the rebels, and the tenants themselves beaten unmercifully. The palace servants deserted, and the palace washing had to be taken to Cuttack almost twenty miles away. The palace filed various criminal cases with the magistrate, who advised the Raja to reconcile himself with his tenants as best he could and to accept the present assessment, suggesting that he might try for an increase later. The Raja refused. This angered the magistrate, and in turn encouraged the tenants.

The Raja's position gradually worsened. He had not a pice in rent coming in and was afraid he might be imprisoned

by the Collector as a result of one of the innumerable cases against him. He spent most of his time incognito in Cuttack and Cuttack, where his debts, due to living expenses and legal costs, steadily mounted. Meanwhile within the palace the position was even worse. Unable to tolerate the shortages of food and clothing, the Raja's mother and brother applied to the court for maintenance. The Raja was driven to despair by ever-increasing debts, due to his servant's treachery and his family's complaints to the courts. He distrusted the whole world and feared someone would poison his food and murder him : he gave up eating cooked-rice and lived on puffed rice and milk.

I set out for Domapara in the July or August of 1876. I had been paid three months' salary in advance by the Raja and had collected the money from Jagamohana Babu. The Raja's brother came to escort me to the Fort. The Kathayodi was then in full spate. We hired a couple of palanquins and by dusk arrived at the Fort. It was no palace, just a few decrepit buildings and a scatter of dilapidated mud huts surrounded by dense jungle.

No rent had been collected in the State for five years. I demanded payment. The village headmen said, only one year's rent was forthcoming, basing their decision on the following argument : 'Supposing you have a milch cow and you don't milk it for five days; then one day you decide to milk it; will you get one day's milk or five ?' No matter which headman I approached, nor where, nor when, I invariably got the same reply. My sphere of action bristled with dangers. I did not dare meddle with anything, for both the Raja and his subjects distrusted me, and besides the Collector's instructions had been merely to keep an eye on things and do nothing. From time to time I went to Cuttack to see the Raja, make various suggestions and seek instructions. All I ever got was 'yes' or 'no', and neither was easy to come by. The Raja thought hard before replying, for he was suspicious of everything and everybody.

Towards the end of December, the Collector came to Domapara on tour. He first pitched camp at the village of Baara on the borders of Domapara and Cuttack. Accompanying the Collector were the Superintendent of Police and twenty constables, an Assistant Magistrate, assistants, secretaries and clerks, in all perhaps a little more than a hundred people. I had received advance notice and arranged everything. 'Saving, spending or serving can accomplish anything in this world'. The Raja was also in the village, but he paid no heed and did not bestir himself. I had to see to the catering for everyone, from the Collector's dogs to the Head Clerk.

The behaviour of the officers worried me. The Government had issued strict instructions that the disturbances within the State were to be settled by hook or by crook. The crisis was now imminent. Either the State would remain in the Raja's control or be confiscated by the Government on the pretext of his incompetence. There was no one but me to safeguard the Raja's interests. He was sitting tight in the house of one of his tenants like the Visnu, metamorphosed into a tree. I reasoned with him using various arguments and examples. I begged him politely; I threatened him; finally, unable to bear it, I scolded him; but all he said was : 'The rents will definitely have to be raised.' I told him politely : 'If you don't change your attitude, the State will be confiscated.' He was unmoved. 'Let them confiscate it,' he replied firmly. Then I asked him to see the Collector. 'No,' he replied in a slightly raised voice. I well knew the meaning of that 'No' : 'There's a court case in process to obtain my just rights. Why should I flatter anyone ?'

It was December. When the Sahebs arrived in Baara, a strong wind blew up with unseasonal rain and it persisted. Everyone stayed indoors. I alone splashed here and there in the mud and rain. I went to see the Collector in his tent. After various other topics, the subject of the revolt finally came up. Here is a brief summary of what I reported to him. 'I've been in Domapara four months now and have

made a thorough study of the internal situation. The State's last assessment was made twenty years ago. In the meantime much waste land has been brought into cultivation. In the past the land was assessed at moderate rents. The Raja wants a fresh assessment. By law the rent of land should be assessed in accordance with its area and boundaries. The Raja is not insisting on the full rent, however. He wishes to increase the rents by merely two pice per acre. He commenced the new assessment in accordance with your instructions, but the village headmen would not allow the land to be surveyed. The present troubles are not really a dispute between the Raja and his tenants. It is the village headmen and former officials alone who are causing the trouble. The tenants are not really enjoying the newly cultivated land tax-free. The headmen and officials are collecting the revenues from them and pocketing the money. The raja has not received any revenue from his tenants for the last five years. He has had to borrow to pay his tribute. He is so short of money that he has terrible difficulty in keeping his mother, his brother and the palace servants in food and clothing. If you would just issue instructions to increase the rents by two pice per acre, all this trouble would be over.

The Collector sat and listened attentively to all I had to say. Finally he said, 'Everything you've said about the rents is correct, Babu. By hook or by crook, the rents must be settled this year, but there's to be no increase. I've already given assurances that the rents will not be increased.' The magnanimous John Beames was an extraordinarily learned man, a benefactor to the tenant, a man who desired the advancement of Orissa, and a father to the poor, but he had one fault : right or wrong, once he had issued his instructions, he would never retract them. Without another word I took my leave.

That night I again saw the Raja and informed him of the Collector's intentions. The Raja said, 'You must do as I say. Make me a fresh assessment of the State with an increase in rents of two pice per acre and you can pocket the five years arrears of rent from the rural areas. I shalln't

take a penny of it.' The Raja's plight distressed me greatly. He was housed in the corner of a cramped little ruin on the verge of collapse. A wick burned dimly in an earthen lamp. He had but two attendants. He must surely be delivered from this.

Along the southern edge of the village ran the Cuttack-Banki road, on the southern side of which stood a Saivite temple. It was a small thatched building. I had heard it housed also snakes. I had often had to stay in the village on the way to or from Cuttack, but had never gone near the temple at night for fear of snakes, and no one ever stayed the night there either. The shortage of accommodation elsewhere that day forced me to take refuge there. Having completed my day's work, I lay down alongside the stone bull, Siva's mount, in the open pavilion in front of the temple. I had completely forgotten my fear of the snakes. Outside all night long, the wind howled and the rain poured. And in my mind raged a storm of violent thoughts. Sleep was out of the question. I lay in my bedding, trying to devise a plan. Finally an idea began flickering in my mind.

The Government had summoned the headmen and tenants of all the villages in the State to assemble at the *Kacheri* at 4 p. m. the following day, when the five-year-old dispute was to be settled and the Raja's fortune decided. The tenants of Baara and near-by Bhagipur and Gaalaba were loyal to the Raja. At day-break I sent runners to fetch the headmen and principal tenants from these three villages and arranged with them that they should say to the Collector, they were willing to accept the Dewan as arbitrator in the dispute between the Raja and themselves and would like the Collector to allow him to settle it.

By four o' clock that afternoon the rain had slackened off, yet there was still a strong wind with fine drizzle. In the *Kacheri* tent next to the Collector's stood the Raja, three or four peons and clerks, and myself. I went to the Collector and told him, the tenants had accepted me as arbitrator in the dispute between themselves and the Raja. They wanted the

Collector to allow me to settle it. He was delighted. 'Good, Babu, good. I shall be most gratified if you do. I've been hearing about this business on and off for about two years now and I'm tired of it.' It was almost four O'clock. A peon in front of the Collector's tent began calling stentorously (in Hindi) : 'Headmen and tenants of Domapara, be upstanding'. From beneath the trees in the mango grove, the verandas, caves and insides of houses, group by group people began emerging. A group was late. It came scampering forward. The people were forming up in rows in front of the Collector's tent. There were almost two thousand. I scanned their faces anxiously, wondering what had become of my supporters. The horizon looked darkly ominous. And my heart was swathed in black : I was in for it now ; of that I felt certain.

Wrapped from head to foot in an English blanket, the Collector emerged from the tent and stood on the veranda. Only his eyes and face were visible. The assistant and I were standing in front, and a little to one side, of the Collector, who said in Hindi : 'Well, Gentlemen, I hear you want the Dewan, Phakirmohana Babu, to settle the dispute between the Raja and yourselves !' 'If the Dewan was going to settle the dispute', four or five of the leading headmen shouted in chorus, 'why did you come all the way from Cuttack in this storm ?' Unable to understand them, the Collector turned to me and asked : 'What do they say ?' Quick as a flash I replied 'they say, the Dewan is going to settle the dispute. There was no reason for you to trouble to come in all this storm.' 'Thank you, Gentlemen,' the Collector said. 'The Dewan will settle everything. He's a capable man and I have faith in him. Salaam, Gentlemen. Goodbye. Goodbye.' Saying which, he quickly withdrew into the tent and closed the flaps. The headmen stared at each other in bewilderment, wondering what on earth had got into the Collector. The clerks were my friends and the peons devoted to me. They immediately drove the tenants away from the tent.

The following day the Collector's *Kacheri* tent was pitched in the village of Pathpur ten miles from Baara. No

cases were to be heard that day. The wind and rain continued as before. I had notified the cowherds to supply one maund of ghee and four or five maunds of milk and curds to entertain the Government people. Cowherds supply milk and curds free during official visits and to the Palace as a custom. This has been the custom in the feudatory states from time immemorial. They provide this service because their cattle and buffaloes graze in the State forests. In Domapara the herdsmen had stopped supplying, because of the tenants' revolt. Early that morning I was sitting on a veranda, surrounded by clerks and runners. It was drizzling. The chief cowherd of Domapara presented himself, carrying two earthen vessels, with about two seers of milk in one and half a seer of ghee in the other. The moment I saw him I got terribly angry. There was a log lying in the road in front of me. The rain had made the road terribly muddy. 'Lay this man in the mud, bind him to that log and let one runner pour ghee and milk over his back, while another one beats him with a cane,' I commanded. The command was executed immediately. No sooner had the chief received on his back two or three strokes of the cane, about ten herdsmen dashed up and, prostrating themselves in the road in front of me and wailed, 'Let the chief go, your honour. We'll bring the milk and curds immediately.' True enough, within half an hour load after load of milk, curds and ghee arrived. And a load of fish arrived too, unsolicited. There are four methods of ruling : by conciliation, gifts, punishments, or dissension. Despite proper application, the first two methods had failed. I now resorted to the last two.

That evening I received news, the rebel leaders had held a large meeting in Simlipur. They had decided to point out to the Collector the following day that I, the Dewan, was on the Raja's side and was therefore unlikely to be fair to the tenants. The Collector ought to hear their grievances himself. The following day I went to the Collector's tent to see him. I found him busy. Rain had leaked in the previous night and wet his things. The Collector was pulling them about from corner to corner and rearranging them. Seeing me,

he described the distressing night he had had. Then the following conversation took place.

Saheb 'How are things, Babu ?'

I 'As you know, Sir, the day before yesterday in your presence two thousand tenants accepted me as arbitrator.'

Saheb 'Yes, yes. The tenants said that in my presence. Now what's up ?'

I 'Yesterday afternoon the village headmen called together all the tenants and advised them to disregard what took place the other day and start agitating again.'

Saheb 'Why are the tenants being guided by these people ?'

I 'The poor tenants are really innocent. The headmen are at the root of the trouble. If a peasant doesn't do as they say, they loot his goods, smash his home and beat every member of his household unmercifully. That's why they obey the headmen.'

Saheb 'Give me a list of tenants maltreated in this way.'

I 'It happened to lots of people earlier on. Four days ago the home of a washerman was raided : his possessions were rifled and he himself was beaten unmercifully, because he had washed the clothes of palace household.'

Saheb 'Right. Prove this one case.'

I 'No tenant will testify, Sir, for fear of the headmen.'

Saheb 'Well see what you can do.'

I took my leave and dejectedly made my way back to my quarters. I was seriously worried. What was I to do ? There was no hope of getting help from the Raja. Even though

what I said was true, no one was likely to testify to the fact. Such were my thoughts as I made my way back. Suddenly I heard someone call : 'Hey Dewan ! Why do you come back from the Collector's tent looking so down-in-the mouth ?' I turned round and saw Nidhi Pattanayaka sitting on a little veranda. 'What's there to say ?' I suddenly blurted out. 'It's all over Mr. Pattanayaka. From now on the Karana caste are in disgrace.' Pattanayaka swiftly sprang from the veranda and embraced me tightly, 'What is it ?' 'What's the matter, Dewan ?' I took him aside and whispered : 'Four days ago in Nistipur the headmen rifled the home of a certain washerman and beat him up. You must have heard about it. Everyone else has. Well, some tell-tales have told the Collector the job was done by Jagu and his crowd. Is this true ? I for one hadn't heard of Jagu being involved, though I know Jaguni Subuddhi was, and a few others from Simlipur. I've just heard the Collector order the Police to handcuff Jagu and bring him in.' Nidhi Pattanayaka asked me how Jagu could be saved. 'Go to the Collector,' I replied, 'and tell him, Jagu did not raid the washerman's in Nistipur. Then he'll get off. Mind, you go straight to the Collector without consulting anyone else though. There's no time to lose. He asked me to go with him. We went together to the Collector's tent. I told Pattanayaka to wait outside and went in. I told the Collector : 'Pattanayaka knows all about the rifling of the washerman's in Nistipur, Sir. I suggest his statement be taken right away. Otherwise, once he's consulted the headmen, he'll lie.'

The Collector sat at his *Kacheri* desk and summoned Nidhi Pattanayaka. The moment Nidhi entered, he quickly blurted out : 'Saheb, when the washerman's was rifled, Jagu wasn't there.' After Collector had taken all Nidhi had to say on a witness form, I asked :

Question : 'Right, Pattanayaka, which washerman's was rifled ? What's his name and address ?'

Answer 'He lives in Nistipur. I forget his name now.'

Question : 'Which other headmen were in the raid ?'

Answer 'Jaguni Subuddhi and so and so, and so and so.' (He named six persons)

Question 'What relation of yours is Jagabandhu Pattanayaka' ?

Answer 'My nephew.'

Question : 'You and he live in the same house and eat the same food ?'

Answer 'Yes'

The Collector issued warrants for the arrest of the accused and dismissed me.

At midday from the direction of the villages of Simlipur Karbar on the banks of the Mahanadi there came a thousand tenants, led by about ten headmen, making jubilantly for Pathpur. The headmen were assuring the tenants that the case would now be decided in their favour and they would not have to pay a pice more in rent. The moment the headmen descended the south bank to the sands in the bed of the Rana river, nine constables and a mass of village watchmen descended the north bank. The two parties met in the middle of the river, where handcuffs were clapped onto the wrists of Jaguni Subuddhi, Jagabandhu Pattanayaka and other headmen. The thousand peasants who had been bringing up the rear, turned on their heels and ran. In a few moments there was not a soul to be seen, except the accused, the constables and the watchmen.

That afternoon the case of the washerman of Nistipur was heard in the Collector's *Kacheri*. Two tenants came forward as eye-witnesses to testify. When the case was proved, the accused were each sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

Before leaving Domapara I atoned somewhat for the deceitfulness I had employed against Nidhi Pattanayaka. He had been dispossessed of all his land for non-payment of taxes. In view of his straitened circumstances, it was unlikely

he would ever be able to regain possession by paying the taxes, so I paid the outstanding ninety-six rupees out of my own pocket and put the land permanently in his name.

The Collector struck camp and set out for Talbast, the biggest and best village in the state of Domapara. After hearing a number of cases there, he asked me for a list of the headmen involved in the revolt who had not gone to jail. I supplied it and he issued writs putting them on probation for a year.

The moment I left my quarters the following morning and sat upon the veranda, about twelve headmen and a number of leading tenants prostrated themselves in the muddy road in front of me, 'Save us your Reverence, save us. You are our father and mother, your Honour.' 'You may be saved, provided you do as I say,' I replied. 'Command us, Command us', they all cried in chorus.'

My First command : 'You will allow' your land to be measured without any protest whatsoever.'

Headmen : 'So be it.'

My Second command : 'There will be a slight increase in the revenue assessment on the land.'

Headmen : 'So be it.'

My Third command : 'The revenue for the last five years will be paid with interest before sunset by all the village headmen.'

After much bargaining it was finally agreed no interest would be charged on the outstanding revenue. For the moment only three years' rent would be paid. The payment of the remaining two would be deferred till after the coming harvest.

All the state's tenants had saved the five years' revenue in their homes. They were convinced that royal taxes were

never waived. They had to be paid some time or other. But the headmen had taken almost two years' revenue for court costs. Consequently, it was impossible for the tenants to pay the five years' outright.

There were runners from villages all over Domapara, waiting in the Collector's *Kacheri*. The moment an order was issued, it was immediately circulated throughout the whole State. When a decision was reached on the payment of the revenue to the Raja all the headmen and tenants rushed to their villages to fetch it.

The paying-in of the revenue began at midday. By late that night I had collected eighteen thousand rupees. I then ordered the rest to be paid in at the State *Kacheri* and stopped collecting. Then with the Collector's permission, I cancelled the probationary writs on the headmen. The Collector's entourage struck camp and left Talbast for Khurda.

I dismantled the *Kacheri* at Talbast and returned to the Fort. The King was living in a brick-built pavillion in the garden behind the palace, which he feared to enter, because he distrusted everyone in it. He was seated on a dais on the veranda. I presented myself to him with the money I had collected. Seeing the money, he said, 'No, no. I won't take the money. You collected it. You have it. I want only the new assessment.' Saying which, he withdrew into the building and an attendant closed the door. I did not have the chance to tell the Raja anything. I went from the Raja to the Queen Mother. The doorkeeper of the palace zenana informed that since the Raja had refused to take the money, the Queen Mother was unable to do so either. I asked for a chest or basket to put the money in, but was refused. 'Whatever have I done to deserve so much money?' I wondered. At the time I was not in the least interested in money. During the previous five years numerous officials and gentlemen had mediated on the Raja's behalf but had failed to break the deadlock. Some eminent lawyers from Calcutta and Cuttack had taken about twenty

thousand rupees from the Raja, on the assurance that they would raise the rents. The Raja had to borrow to pay them.

The Raja had debts amounting to five thousand rupees with two money-lenders in Cuttack. Without informing the Raja, I transferred the money to Cuttck and entrusted it to a money-lender in Balu Bazaar, taking a registered hand-note in return.

I engaged surveyors and started having all villages in the state surveyed simultaneously. I used to own a large Kathiawar horse and sometimes I rode out on it into the rural areas to inspect the surveying. I was afraid, once the village headmen were released from prison, they would try to impede the survey. So I was trying to get it finished in the rural areas as quickly as possible.

Until the survey was over, the Raja stayed in Cuttack and Calcutta. The strain of continuous litigation during the six years since he had ascended the throne had affected his reason. He trusted no one, not even his mother, brother, wife or servants. Unless it was absolutely essential, he never saw anyone. He would sit in his solitary room, mumbling to himself and writing. These were the signs of his advising and reasoning with himself.

The jungle had infiltrated right up to the palace wall. To come to or from the palace, one had to push one's way through this jungle. In the last six years no one had so much as pulled a blade of grass from the road. The village headmen used to keep lookouts. If any tenant or employee came to the palace, his home was ransacked and he himself beaten up. My office and quarters adjoined the palace. Whenever I came out in the morning, I saw flocks of wild fowl pecking for worms outside the door. In front of the lion gate of the palace stood the walls and temple of Giridhari. Each morning and evening I used to take a stroll in the paved courtyard inside the temple walls. One morning I saw a hamadryad (*ahiraja*) about fourteen feet long climb a tamarind tree outside the temple gate and eat

a mongoose. I got the huntsmen to clear the jungle from the foot of the palace walls to a distance of one hundred and fifty feet. While working in the feudatory states, I used to keep a double-barrelled gun. A hunter always accompanied me. Each morning as soon as I emerged from the house, he used to show me a few fowl he had bagged.

Within four or five months the rural survey was complete. The surveyors presented their classifications at the chief *Kacheri*. The comparison of the tenants' holdings was made. Now the rent records could be drawn up. So the Raja's presence was required. He was then in Calcutta. On receipt of my letter he returned to the Fort. I was delighted with the change in him. There was no trace of his former distrust of me. He talked gaily. We spent each morning and evening together sitting on our respective dais talking of this and that.

The subject of the assessment came up. The Raja ordered me to increase the assessment by four annas per acre. I made repeated protests about this and tried to talk him out of it, but each time he replied gaily, 'You must get it done, Babu.' I spent five or six days bickering with him, and meanwhile I explained to the leading tenants and persuaded them that the settlement would be an increase of four annas per acre.

When the settlement was almost concluded, I received a letter from the Commissioner's office appointing me to the post of Assistant Manager of Dhenkanal under the Court of Wards. The Raja was unwilling to release me, however. He agreed to pay me two hundred and fifty rupees a month and told me to add the following condition on stamp paper to the value of thirty-four rupees, namely that if for any reason whatsoever I were to be dismissed, he would continue to pay me two hundred and fifty rupees a month for the rest of my life as a pension. The Raja and I went to Cuttack to see the Commissioner. When the Raja told the Commissioner about me, the Commissioner said : 'No, you must release Phakirmohana Babu. The report about him has

already gone to the Government. It can't be changed.' Summoning me on another occasion, he said: 'The Raja is mad. He doesn't know what he is saying. You shouldn't listen to him. We are transferring you to an important post in Dhenkanal.'

It was thus decided that I should leave Domapara and go to Dhenkanal. I promised that whilst in Dhenkanal I would finish off what remained to be done on the Domapara settlement.

I had wanted to build a house in Cuttack and had been looking for a site. The Raja heard of it. A few days before I left Domapara, he gave me five thousand rupees and said: 'Take this and build a house.' He also gave me a mongoose and the ink-stand from his desk. He told me repeatedly to collect the fifty thousand rupees outstanding from the rural areas, but I refused to listen.

Within a few years the five thousand rupees the Raja gave me was spent, but I still have the large, glass ink-stand from his desk and shall have till the end. I am writing in ink from it now, and all my novels and poems were written in ink from it too. Whenever I sit before it, it calls to mind the grave figure of the Raja, Raghunatha Manasinha Bhramarabara; and whenever I look at the one or two sayings of his that I have written, I feel as if I had been writing to his dictation.

CHAPTER 15

ASSISTANT MANAGER IN DHENKANAL (1877-83) (AGE 34-40)

On 1 November 1877 I was appointed Assistant Manager of Dhenkanal on a salary of a hundred rupees a month. After six years' service, I was forced to resign. In Domapara everything went right, in Dhenkanal everything went wrong. Illness and misfortune have dogged my steps since childhood, but then so have luck and happiness. I seem to have been descended on alternately by affluence and poverty, prestige and disrepute, health and sickness. Getting jobs and losing them has been a constant feature of my life. Sometimes money has come my way in abundance in high salaries, princely rewards and business profits. At other times I have been absolutely penniless. The root cause of these temporary impoverishments has been my excessive faith in people in entrusting them with money. Few men have been apportioned as profuse a series of ups and downs as I have had.

Maharaja Bhagiratha Mahendra Bahadur had passed away before I went to Dhenkanal. In Dhenkanal he had been the first to encourage knowledge and the vernacular, and to build schools for English and Sanskrit, and free clinics and main roads. He was an eminent scholar in both Sanskrit and the vernacular. Each evening from dusk till 10 p. m. he held literary meetings, at which one day a work in Sanskrit would be discussed and the next one in Oriya. His greatest achievement was the Fort's stupendous Bhagirathi tank. He was corpulent and had special chairs made for him, which could easily have sat two people. From time to time he used to visit the premises of Cuttack Printing Company, which

is why two chairs were always reserved for him on the first floor. They are still there. I first made his acquaintance at a meeting. He took to me from the start and always regarded me with affection.

Having no son, Bhagiratha Mahendra had adopted the third son of the Raja of Baud. His adopted son's name was Dinabandhu Mahendra Bahadur. On the death of Bhagiratha Mahendra, Dinabandhu Mahendra Bahadur became the Ruler. At the time of my coming to Dhenkanal, he was still a minor. Shortly after his ascent to the throne, the Commissioner came to Dhenkanal to see to his staff. Having seen to the several other departments, he came to the Raja's personal attendants, of whom there were seventy-two. He decreed that a boy ought not to be burdened with so large a staff and began cutting down. There were four servants for tooth-sticks : the first to cut the branch from the tree; the second to cut the branch into tooth-sticks of the requisite length; and the third to transport them to the appropriate store; and the fourth to hand them to His Majesty, when needed. The Commissioner dismissed three and retained one. He similarly reduced staff in other departments. Of the six Brahmin cooks in the kitchens, he dismissed four and retained two. One of those dismissed came from Cuttack district. He asked me to get his job back for him. I took him to the Commissioner and said : 'The Raja can't do without this cook : he prepares the Raja's sweets and knows how to bake bread'. The Commissioner decreed that such a cook was necessary, but that instead of seven rupees a month he ought to receive thirty. On that salary he was retained.

I began to work in Dhenkanal just one month before the puja holidays, when I returned to Balasore to fetch my child-bride and my daughter by my first marriage. There were no special quarters for the Assistant Manager. At first we stayed in the dak bungalow. Afterwards the Superintendent granted six hundred rupees for the construction of a house. A little to the north of the fort there was a dense bamboo thicket. I had this cleared and a house built to my own

design and specifications. The total cost of construction was sixteen hundred rupees. Of this I paid one thousand from my own pocket. The Deputy Superintendent, Ray Nanda Kisora Dasa Bahadur, informed the Superintendent and had me reimbursed by the exchequer.

Round about this time a son was born to me. The astrologers calculated the birth chart. The birth was at midnight and thus under the sign of Leo. But for a new-born babe in the lying-in room that day Leo signified death. After living for only six months the child died of a slight ailment. I had named him Manamohana. His features were well-formed. They are still vivid in my mind. His death darkened the world for me, but its effects on my wife were even greater. To console her I arranged a reading of Balarama Dasa's *Ramayana*. A brahmin came each evening and read from the manuscript. Not even I, let alone my wife, could understand a thing.

I stopped the readings and, fetching Valmiki's Sanskrit *Ramayana* from the Māharaja's library, began a verse translation of it. I used to translate during the day and recite to my wife in the evening. She understood my verses immediately I read them. Her grief for her son was gradually forgotten. When I had finished translating the *Bala Kanda* (Child Canto), I had it printed and distributed free to the general public. I started gradually to translate and recite the *Ayodhya Canto*. My wife used eagerly to await each daily recital. She finished her work beforehand and put out two seats. Some days we held additional recitals. She would sit stock-still in front of me, listening with her palms clasped, as in prayer, and her mind at peace. She became completely absorbed in it. From the start of Rama's exile in the forest, tears streamed from her eyes. The ground in front of her was, I noticed, wet with tears at the end of each recital. When the translation of the *Ayodhya Canto* was complete, my wife said: 'We weep for our son, because he would have preserved our name, don't we? This book is our son: It will preserve our name for ever.' On 11 October 1881, our second son was born.

Round about this time the permanent Commissioner for Orissa, our dear friend, Ravenshaw, became for three months a member of the Revenue Board, and during his absence his duties were discharged by the Collector for Cuttack district, John Beames.

Ravenshaw and Beames were at permanent loggerheads. Had Revenshaw been appointed Commissioner elsewhere, after his work on the Board was over, Beames would have remained in Orissa permanently. To Ravenshaw, however, the appointment of Beames as Commissioner of Orissa was undesirable. For a shortwhile Ravenshaw himself returned and Beames resumed his former post. Then, as the dissension between the two officials grew more intense, the Lieutenant Governor came on tour. Hearing of this bickering between his subordinates, he said : 'Orissa wants new blood.' * Ravenshaw went off to a new appointment as Commissioner of Burdwan and Beames as Judge and Commissioner of Sylhet; and as Commissioner of Orissa came Smith. To me Beames had been a true friend and patron. From the day of his transfer from Orissa, my stars changed.

Several of my enemies began communicating to the Commissioner anonymous remonstrances alleging that I was in the habit of accepting bribes from litigants. The remonstrances were not credited by the authorities, but since they concerned me, the assistant Superintendent, Ray Nanda Kisora Dasa Bahadur, came to investigate. Impartial investigation showed the allegations to be false. Though assured by both Nanda Kisora Babu and the Manager, Banamali Babu, that 'Fakirmohana Babu is a very honest man', * the Commissioner replied : 'I have no faith in that man.' *

Since the anonymous remonstrances had failed, a signed one was sent to the Commissioner, alleging that I had

* Phakirmohana's English

accepted a bribe of several hundred rupees. The Commissioner investigated the matter, and his findings were : disgruntled at having case of his dismissed, the remonstrator had fabricated a case against me. The man was charged under section 211 of the Criminal Code : i.e., with having brought a malicious prosecution.

While staying in Dhenkanal I fell ill. The illness worsened daily. Taking six months' leave, I returned to Balasore. During my absence, the manager found an opportunity to harm me. In one of the cases I had decided, there had been an appeal. When about to send the file to the higher court, I had noticed the sheet was almost illegible because of numerous crossings-out. I had torn the sheet up and rewritten the sentence legibly on a fresh one. I had of course not changed the wording.

The manager sent a report to the Superintendent, alleging that I invariably wrote my verdicts long after the event and claimed to have made on-the-spot investigations, when I had not. As proof of these allegations, he enclosed the file of the above case. A letter from the Superintendent's office demanding an explanation arrived in Balasore. I was then ill in bed. In a secret communication my friend and well-wisher Nanda Kisora Dasa advised me to resign, and on 30 September 1883 I did so.

CHAPTER 16

DEWANI IN DASPALLA (1884-86)

AGE (41-43)

After returning from Dhenkanal, I rested in Balasore and gradually got well. Having finished the seven cantos of the *Ramayana* I started translating the *Mahabharata*, spending three or four immensely pleasurable hours on it each day. I had already published some cantos of the *Ramayana*, but could not afford to publish the rest. Prince Vaikunthanath De agreed to bring out a special edition of the full seven cantos. The publisher, it was decided, would be his father, Raja Syamananda De Bahadur, who gave me a prize of seven hundred and fifty rupees. This enabled me to pay off my debts.

I was hard up and spending all my time looking for some way of earning a living, when three letters arrived in the post. I opened and read two, but for some reason did not feel like reading the third. I had been standing reading at the head of my bed. Deciding to read it later, I slipped the unopened letter into my pillow-case, went for a bath and forgot all about it. There was a big exhibition on in Calcutta. The following day I went to see it. Back in Balasore two or three weeks later, I was stripping my bedding to send it to the laundry, when the letter dropped out of the pillow-case. Opening it, I found it was from the Maharaja of Keonjhar, who wished to appoint me his manager on a salary of a hundred and fifty rupees a month. I was to let him know quickly, whether or not I would accept. I made inquiries and learnt that, having received no reply from me, he had appointed a fellow-townsman of mine, Babu Kunja Bihari De.

It was now essential for me to get a job. The Superintendent of the Feudatory States, Mr. Smith, was being transferred.

Since there was now every likelihood of my finding work in one of the Feudatory States, I went to Cuttack. My friend and patron, Nanda Kisora Dasa Bahadur, started looking for suitable post for me. Two dewanis suddenly fell vacant : Daspalla and Narsinghpur. I was appointed to Daspalla and the ex-dewan of Keonjhar, Babu Jagamohana Dasa, to Narsinghpur. Both States had, since the accession of their respective Rajas, been administered by the Government, because of their rulers' extreme oppressiveness to tenants.

Jagamohana Babu and I were appointed to our dewanis at exactly the same moment in August 1884. Our only problem was : how were we to get to our posts ? It was the height of the rainy season. Swollen by the rains, the Mahanadi had overflowed both banks. Our route lay along its south bank, which in places was flooded chest-deep. An additional hazard was provided by mountain streams. The rains rendered their currents swift and their waters too deep for wading. Though at the end of the rains they would run dry, to cross them now would require a boat, so going by bullock-cart or palanquin was out of the question.

Clubbing together, we hired one the commercial transport boats that ply the Mahanadi. These boats transport wares from the Feudatory States to Cuttack, where they unload, before returning empty. They are called 'upstream boats', because they ply against the currents. They are the mainstay of the merchants of the Feudatory States. Their construction was as follows. Embedded in the hull in a straight line from stem to stern stood four or five posts, whose tops supported the ridge of a roof, which sloped down on both sides. The roof consisted of straw thatching four inches thick, supported on split bamboo, from which the soft pith had been removed. The hard, slender canes were tightly woven into a close-knit thatch, strong enough to support boatmen running up and down on it whilst sailing the boat. The hull was divided into small room-like holds, partitioned from each other by bamboo-matting walls, whose number depended upon the number of posts. In each hold were stowed different kinds of merchandise. When the stowing was finished, the thatches were tightly

lashed to the bulwarks. Though in high winds, when the boat was plying the river, waves scooped water upon to the thatches, it always ran off again, without ever penetrating the holds and harming the merchandise.

Our hired boat was moored at the Gargaria Mahadeva stairs on the Mahanadi river. At about nine in the morning the boatmen respectfully stowed us, two dewans, in the central hold and tightly lashed down the thatch. Our servants were stowed in a different hold or cubby-hole. The insides of the holds were almost devoid of air and light. We dewans sat or rather lay on our bedding : for when sitting, one banged one's head on the thatch. There was not room to stretch one's legs either. We lay leaning on our pillows, curled up like worms.

Shouting 'Hail, Mother Ganges, Hail!', the boatmen cast off. We were to go upstream, so it was necessary to punt. Our crew consisted of five punters and a foreward coxswain. At ten or eleven that morning we put to shore at Dhabaleswar Mahadeva island only three miles upstream from where we had started. The boatmen moored the boat to a punt-pole driven into the beach and then, untying the thatch from the bulwarks, unloaded us. The servants set to getting the meal ready. The boatmen then popped us, bathed and fed, back into our 'dungeon' and punted off.

In mid-stream the water was too deep for the poles and the current too strong for the boat to withstand. So we were punting along close in to the shore at a distance of about six feet. When from time to time we came to clear stretches of sandy shore, the punters stowed their poles and, tying our thirty-yard rope to the stem of the boat, walked along the sands, pulling the boat behind them. In many places the river water had submerged the banks and flooded inland to a distance of about two and a half miles, leaving no trace of the shore, which we were nevertheless to follow. Sometimes we sailed through fields and in places had to take the boat through woods. At such times the coxswain used to steer the boat by clutching at branch after branch with a long hooked pole. Sometimes

some of the punters propelled the boat by pulling on, and, pushing aside, the branches of the trees. Some afternoons we put to shore at very charming spots. The shore would be one vast stretch of undulating dunes, enclosed from the north, south and west by an immense wall-like range of mountains, over whose western peaks the sun would be setting like a ball of molten gold. And towards those western mountains crying and calling over our heads would sail a motley flight of birds. It seemed as though the Mahanadi river ended at the foot of that western mountain wall, desolate, still and empty of all habitation, human or animal.

At this dallying pace we put in just before noon on the eighth day at the river stairs of a village within the Narsinghpur domains. To the north lay Narsinghpur and to the south Daspalla, the Fort of the former being but two miles from the Mahanadi, whilst the capital of the latter, Madhubangarh, was about fourteen miles south. On the river bank stood the Daspalla village of Belpoda. On its southern edge lay a Government dak bungalow. Along the river bank and skirting the village ran the Sambalpur-Puri road, the pilgrim route for people from Central India and Orissa's western Feudatory States. About sixteen miles west of Belpoda lies the famous Barmul pass, where the two immense mountain-walls on the north and south bank of the Mahanadi rise up from the river. At this point the river's width is slight but its depth is prodigious. It is a breath-taking sight.

Babu Jagamohana Dasa disembarked and bade me farewell at the landing place in the Narsinghpur village. From there one could see the village of Belpoda on the opposite shore. The boatmen set sail for it, but in mid-stream wind and rain forced them to moor the boat on an island. It was the following morning before we put in at the landing place in Belpoda. Daspalla Fort was about fourteen miles further south. A royal official was waiting to escort me there.

At nine O' clock the following morning I arrived at my allotted quarters in the Fort. My rations from the Raja's

stores filled a whole room. It was customary for the royal stores to provide such rations. A well-bred guest arriving at a Fort would receive each day sufficient easily to last a month. Practised store-keepers packed these rations with such fore-thought that guests did not want for anything: even tooth-picks and brushes were included.

At ten or eleven O' clock that morning I went for an audience with His Majesty. He was seated on a carpet, reclining on a cushion. In front of him nine or ten feet to the left sat royal officials such as the accountants and scribes, general store-keepers and paddy store-keepers and so forth. All of these were seated on the ground. Behind them stood nine or ten personal attendants. There was also a crowd of chief scribes from the rural areas who had come to see the new dewan. In front of His Majesty five or six feet to his right lay the carpet intended for the dewan.

The moment I took my seat, His Majesty began to scrutinise me from the tips of my toe-nails to the top of the tallest hair on my head. One minute he would be staring fixedly at my body, the next he would be drawing back his clenched right hand and wagging his thumb repeatedly this way and that (an Indian gesture of depreciation), whilst looking into the eyes of the scribes, attendants and headmen. He was convinced that slender people were unintelligent : I was slender and *ipso facto* an ignoramus. To make me erudite, he advised me to eat lots of ghee : The heavier I got, the brainier I would be. He sent me four pounds of ghee a day for quite some time.

Despite much toil, His Majesty had from childhood learnt only how to sign his name. Whilst on tour in the Feudatory States Mr. Ravenshaw, the Superintendent, had once come to Daspalla. In view of the large number of complaints about injustice by the Raja, Ravenshaw said : 'You're a dolt, Your Majesty. You're incapable of administering your state, so on behalf of the Government I'm sending you a dewan.'

'What is that that you said, Sir ? Our regal personage is a dolt ! Bring us paper. We shall this instant write our royal name and Daspalla and Yoramo state and everything.'

Unfortunately, Ravenshaw declined to acquaint himself with His Majesty's scholastic attainments.

His Majesty once visited Cuttack. Informed of there being a college there, where children studied, he deemed it necessary to go and see what kind of thing a college was. So he went there and was shown around all the classes by the warmly hospitable professors. Afterwards, when seated in the Library and offered pen, ink and visiting book, he enquired their purpose.

'This, Your Majesty, is the visiting book, in which to record your impressions of what you have seen in the College.'

'Yes, yes. We shall write,' the Raja said, 'but tell us where.'

When one of the professors had opened the book and placed it before him, His Majesty wrote : 'Sri Caitanya Bhanja Deo, Rajā of the States of Daspalla and Yoramo.....Sri Caitanya Bhanja Deo, Raja of the States of Daspalla and Yoramo.....' again and again untiringly, till three or four pages had been filled with scrawl. Then he put down the pen and departed.

All the professors were then Bengali. The rapidity of the royal hand had led them to believe a lot of impressions were being recorded, but when they called a pandit and heard the import of all that scrawl, they roared with laughter.

The King had a fault : he did the opposite of what he was told. The royal physician often told me, he was the only one who could minister to the Raja. When I asked why, he said : 'The Raja does the opposite of what I tell him.' So whenever he wanted His Majesty to fast, he prescribed a slap-up meal with very sour curds. Whereupon His Majesty would say : 'We are the King. Are we to be told what to do by a

mere physician ? Today we shall not eat at all ?' And true enough, that day the Raja would fast. Everything he did was killingly funny.

His Majesty's educational short-comings may be deduced from the following incident. During my first year as Dewan of Daspalla the Superintendent of the Feudatory States, Mr. Metcalf, came to Daspalla on tour. The following conversation took place between him and the Raja.

Metcalf : 'The Government has issued instructions for the opening of a railway from Khadgapur to Bilaspur.'

Raja : 'What's that ? Trains will run ! But, Sir, those trucks can't run across fields on footpaths, can they ?'

Metcalf : 'No, Your Majesty, tracks will be laid for them.'

Raja : It'll cost a pretty penny to lay tracks, won't it ? It could cost as much as five thousand rupees, couldn't it ?'

Metcalf : 'It will cost a great deal, Your Majesty.'

Raja : 'Ten thousand ?'

Metcalf : 'A very, very great deal.'

About three months after I took up duties as Dewan of Daspalla a headman came to see me from the Yoramo estate, which lies within the State's domains. In the course of conversation he mentioned an action which had been brought against him by the State Government the previous year. It will give some idea of His Majesty's judicial procedure. The incident was as follows.

Some backbiter informed His Majesty that the headman of Yoramo had painted two lotuses on the front wall of his house. His Majesty only ought, the fellow wheedled, to have paintings of lotuses on the walls of the Palace, yet this headman had dared paint some on his. The nerve of the fellow ! At the Raja's command, two attendants arrested the headman and

brought him to His Majesty, who by then had forgotten all about the paintings. The moment he clapped eyes on the headman, he asked : 'Hey, Headman how did you get so fat ? Tell me, how much ghee do you eat a day ?'

'Where would I get the money to eat ghee, Sire ?' the headman replied with polite timidity.

'We order him to answer a question and the fellow not only disregards it but lies into the bargain. Attendants, does this headman eat ghee or does he not ? I ask you.'

His Majesty's subtle judgment concluded : the headman had been looting his realms and growing fat on his consumption of ghee; his attendants were therefore to search the man's home and recover the money. There was in the Palace an old scribe who had been there since the previous reign. He knew the Raja's character like the back of his hand. Further more, he was the headman's kinsman. So he respectfully addressed His Majesty saying : 'We shall naturally recover the money from the headman's home, Sire, but first let us examine his accounts and determine exactly how much is to be recovered. Then we can fetch as much as we please without fear of interference from the Commissioner.'

'That is precisely what we command' the Raja replied.

Accordingly the headman sent for a mass of palm leaves and began preparing ledgers. Seated conspicuously before the Raja, he scribbled away all day long. To set his accounts in order took him a whole month. When one morning studying His Majesty's convenience the Palace scribe demanded the headman accounts, he placed before the Raja not less than seven great ledgers. At the Raja's command, the scribe commenced to con them. Opening up the ledgers, he turned over masses of leaves. Every single leaf contained endless repetitions of the same sentence : 'Heaven preserve me. Heaven preserve me. Heaven.....' Inwardly laughing, the scribe rejplaced the ledgers.

'Well, Scribe' His Majesty enquired, 'What did you find out ?'

Scribe : 'It balances, 'Sire.'

Raja : 'What do you mean ?'

Scribe : 'I mean, Sire, the headman paid into the treasury everything he collected since Caitra (March-April). He has nothing left to live on.'

Raja : 'I see. Then we conclude : the ledgers balance : the headman embezzled nothing.'

The headman was released. Since, however, several oppressed tenants had complained to the Superintendent, the Government has started appointing dewans to counsel the Raja and pacify the State.

I found in Daspalla cases were few and extremely straightforward. Most of the rural population were either Khond or Khaira (*i. e.* aborigines). Plaintiffs, defendants and witnesses all spoke the plain truth : there were no discrepancies among their statements.

Most of the people in the state were Khond. They styled themselves 'zamindar' and used not to pay any taxes at all to the Raja, till one day the Commissioner, Mr. Ravenshaw, summoned their headmen and said : 'Since you dwell in the Raja's domains, it's only right that you should pay a little tax. I suggest you pay him one Cuttack seer of paddy per plough. The more ploughs a tenant uses, the more seers he should pay.' All the headmen sat down together and decided : 'The Saheb says, we should pay tax, but we won't pay in Cuttack seers.' They had no idea how much a Cuttack seer was. They informed the Saheb : 'We'll give you a basketful of paddy per plough, but not a Cuttack seer.' I don't remember now whether a Khond basketful equalled three or four Cuttack seers. When the Saheb realised how much paddy a basketful meant, he agreed.

I once went to investigate a case on the borders of Ghumsar and Daspalla. I made time to see the Khond villages

and the sacred spots of their deities. The Khonds' main crop is turmeric. They used to perform *meria*, or human sacrifice, in their sacred spots in order to enhance the colour of the turmeric. This practice was banned by the Government in 1836 : Government troops brought back from Khond territories (Khond Mahal) many children who had been intended for sacrifice. I have come across plenty of such people, who in childhood were educated by missionaries.

Whilst employed at Daspalla, I once came home on leave. When my leave was up and I was due to return, I bumped into Radhanath at the steamer landing stage in Balasore. He had been on tour and was on his way back to his headquarters in Cuttack. We boarded the steamer at about 10 a.m. and set sail for Cuttack. At about nine that night, just as we were leaving the Matai river and entering the Dhamra, a storm blew up with heavy rain. Battered by the huge breakers of the Ghariamala river, the small canal steamer began tossing frantically about, as if in imminent danger of sinking. The passengers were frightened. The Ghariamala is not a river in its own right, but merely the combined mouth of the Brahmani, Baitarani and Salandi Matai rivers. Boatmen greatly fear it. It seems the haunt of all the crocodiles in creation. Radhanath and I were the only passengers in the second class. There was no one else in the cabin. Radhanath had abandoned all hope of survival. He had undone the front tuck of his dhoti and wrapped it round himself, because he was cold. He quickly tied some opium in the end of it. He had contracted tuberculosis at the age of seventeen or eighteen, and the doctors had advised him to take opium regularly for the rest of his life. Whenever a sound came from some quarter of the boat, Radhanath's eyes would dart in that direction, convinced that that side was going under. He had still to write his *Mahayatra* (Journey into the Great Beyond). So his own 'journey into the great beyond' was postponed, and by the power of his *punya* (religious merit) I too was spared.

That was not the only time my life was in jeopardy. I have been faced with death on a number of occasions, the full list being : three times from snakebite ; once from a bear ; once from

an elephant in rut ; once from a herd of bison; once from an arrow about to be fired at me; once from a brandished sword; once from poisoning; and twice from shipwreck.

Yoramo is a separate region of Daspalla and is situated on the north side of the Mahanadi river. Its taxes were assessed separately. They were not paid in money to the Government, but in timber each year for the construction of Sri Jagannatha's Car in Puri, an assessment, which has persisted since the days of the independent kings of Orissa.

The northern edge of Yoramo is contiguous with Anugul. Government forestry officials had gradually extended their forest boundaries in southern Anugul right to the door-steps of the Yoramo villagers. The moment the village herds were released, they strayed into the forestry preserves and were, impounded. Sometimes low-grade Government servants rounded cattle up deliberately in order to raise money from the peasantry. The peasants had grown tired of paying impoundage. They had constantly been complaining to the State Government, though to no avail.

On the Ruler's behalf I reported all this to the Government, who instructed the Forester and the Tax-Collector for Anugul and the Dewan of Daspalla (myself) to make a joint, on-the-spot investigation and report back. On a previously arranged date I arrived at Yoramo Fort. The then Tax-Collector for Anugul was a close friend of mine who had helped me during my first stay in Cuttack, Ray Narayana Candra Nayaka Bahadur. The Forester also arrived on the scene with his staff.

Leaving me on the spot to determine the border, the Tax-Collector went back to Anugul. I began searching for the boundary with the aid of an old survey map and found some trace of it on a mountain-top in the north-west corner of Yoramo. Guided by the map, I cut a ditch in a straight line from this point to a distance of about twenty-five miles, terminating in the north-east corner of Yoramo, where all three boundaries of Anugul, Narsinghpur and Yoramo converged. The Dewan of Narsinghpur came rushing onto

the scene with all his retinue, arguing furiously that I had annexed to Yoramo some woodland belonging to the State of Narsinghpur. Thanks, however, to a small stream, which ran through the forests at the juncture of our respective states, the argument was unable to escalate.

Superintendent Metcalf and Assistant Superintendent Ray Nanda Kisora Dasa Bahadur came to the Fort of Anugul to settle the dispute. With their party came the then Manager of Dhenkanal (later Ray Bahadur) Sudama Candra Nayaka. The dispute was finally settled by another Superintendent two years after I left Daspalla. His decision upheld the line I had drawn.

I returned from Anugul to Yoramo. Along the banks of the Mahanadi river, Yoramo estate possesses numerous mango groves. I stayed in one of them for more than a fortnight. Not far from where I stayed the Mahanadi had breached its banks. Flood water coming through this breach greatly distressed the local peasants. I summoned all the peasants in Yoramo and threw a stone bund across the breach. The bund was constructed of stone from the near-by hills.

The peasants still remember this slight service I did them. They named a certain rock and also the bund I built, after me.

The majority of the inmates in Daspalla jail were *Panas*. These *Panas* were of two types : *Bunas* and Oriyas. Thieving was virtually the profession of the Oriya *Panas*, but *Buna Panas* rarely stole : their trade was weaving. The administration of prisons used to be extremely lax and chaotic. Prisoners were allowed home to celebrate sons' or daughters' weddings or caste functions. They returned of their own accord, when the festivities were concluded. The guards too had special prisoners, whom they let out after dark. The following morning these prisoners would be seen sleeping in their proper places, the goods they had stolen during the night having been shared equally between themselves and the guards.

I began to construct a road from the Fort at Madhuban to the village of Bargarh. The work was being done by prisoners. Half a mile of road had been laid, when the birth of a son to His Majesty resulted in a general amnesty : work on the road ceased.

I was the first to start cultivating cabbages, peas, turnips, radishes and so forth in Daspalla. Prior to that they had been unheard of in the state. Despite much effort and numerous entreaties, however, I was unable to induce the Ruler and his subjects to eat them. 'Please don't give me any more cabbages, Sir', a village headman once said to me. 'I don't like them, no matter how they're cooked. Yesterday I had them cooked with broken rice and acid seasoning, but it still didn't kill the smell.' I had grown lots of cabbage : the cows ate most of them.

A rift gradually developed between the Ruler and me. A group of sadhus once came to one of the villages, where a rich herdsman lived. Because he had not donated enough for their services, two of the sadhus went into his house and started smashing it up. The herdsman caught hold of the pair of them and thrashed them. They complained to the Ruler. When informed by his attendants of the herds of cows and buffaloes the man owned and of the mass of money he had stored in his house, the Ruler exclaimed : 'Beat up sadhus, did he, the wretched fellow.' He then ordered the Police Chief to go and confiscate the herdsman's property, cows and buffaloes. The herdsman dashed to me for protection. I went to the court-house and quashed the diststraint order. The Police Chief explained to the Ruler in my presence that if insulted in this fashion, the sadhus would quit the state, taking away 'righteousness' with them. I snubbed him into silence. The two sadhu plaintiffs, who had been beaten up, were standing there. 'Unless you clear off elsewhere this instant,' I warned them, 'I'll jail the pair of you.' The moment they heard this, they were off like a shot, thus widening my rift with the Ruler.

Superintendent Metcalf came to inspect Daspalla. 'I don't get on with the Dewan,' the Ruler told him. 'Please

send me a new one'. The Superintendent said to me : 'We can find no fault with your work, but since there's this rift between you and the Ruler you can hardly carry on here, can you ?' So he appointed me to the subdivision of Bamun pass in Mayurbhanj and gave the dewani of Daspalla to one of the clerks in the Commissioner's office. In January 1886, having handed over to the new Dewan, I returned to Cuttack, extremely pleased at having landed a job closer to Balasore. But on arrival in Cuttack I learnt that the State's own government had already appointed the youngest brother of Krsnacandra Deo, Chota Raya Saheb, to the post in Bamun pass. Consequently, I was stranded in Cuttack without a job.

CHAPTER 17

DEWANI IN PALALAHARA (1886-1887)

(AGE 43-44)

Sometime ago there had been a rising against the Ruler in Palalahara. The chief rebels had been arrested and punished. To arrest and punish the remainder, the Superintendent granted me first class magisterial powers and sent me there on a salary of a hundred rupees a month. Upon my arrival, I found that the malcontents had, after the arrest of their leaders, all scattered into the jungle. The rest of the tenants were quiet. There were no cases of any description. The royal court-house was deserted.

I had absolutely nothing to do. My mornings went in the translation of the *Mahabharata* and my afternoons in sociable games of caupat. After dusk no one stirred from the house: for Palalahara was then heavily forested and the fading light brought tigers and bears onto the streets. Some afternoons I visited the Ruler. He was intelligent and charming, but inordinately generous. His generosity led him deeply into debt.

Of the many stories I heard about the Ruler's generosity I shall record but one. There used to be a poor Kabuli roaming round Cuttack, living on the charity of his fellow countrymen, who eventually advised him to get some money from the Ruler of Palalahara and set up in business. The only snag was : how was he to approach the Ruler empty-handed. The Cuttack Kabulis subscribed to buy him an English blanket. With this as his sole stock-in-trade, he turned up in Palalahara, placed it before the Ruler, salaamed and took his leave, as tutored by his merchant friends. True to the Fort's traditions, the Royal Treasurer granted the merchant a subsistence allowance of one rupee a day. But the merchant

scrounged food from His Majesty's stores and pocketed the money. The king had no time to haggle over a blanket. Three months passed. The Kabuli meanwhile accumulated ninety rupees. The clothes he had come in were by then worn to shreds. Yet if he laid out money on clothes, what was he to do business on ? Very early one winter's morning (and in the jungle-clad hills of Palalahara it could be really cold) he was sitting semi-naked on a heap of ashes, warming himself before an immense log he had set fire to, when suddenly the gaze of the Ruler, who was out on a morning stroll, fell upon him. Attributing this hardship to his having kept the poor fellow waiting all this time, the Ruler was saddened and ordered the treasurer to return to him the blanket he had bought from him. The Kabuli was instantly handed the value of the blanket ten rupees, and his travelling expenses and dismissed.

I had the bad habit of being a heavy chewer of betel. I got through fifty or sixty leaves a day. They were unobtainable in Palalahara. The nearest shop stocking them was thirty-six miles away at the Fort of Talcher. One morning I found I had none in the house. There were none in the royal palace either. Stale betel leaves and veins could be crushed and stored in powder form. Mixed with sliced betelnut, lime and catechu it made a passable chew, when one had run out of fresh leaves. I sent for some powdered betel. That could not be had either. I had just about given up hope, when I saw a man with a pack trudging up the road. He was taking some things to a gentleman staying in the forests of Keonjhar. I called him over. The moment he opened his pack, out flopped a bundle of two or three hundred betel leaves. Within seconds I was chewing a few and thanking the Almighty. There are times when at an extremity of need and hardship help arrives like this, in a most unexpected and extraordinary fashion.

I was sent food and butcher's meat from the royal stores each morning. There was also a man from the Tihar tribe assigned to supply me with fish. But some days he did not supply any. When I asked why, he said he had been

to collect gold. A mountain stream ran by the southern side of the royal palace. Its sandy bed was laced with gold. Sifting sand all day long, he was able to extract gold to the value of two or three pence. That much a day could be earned even by fishing.

My official work in Palalahara was nil. I just passed my time translating the *Mahabharata* and playing games of caupat. I was tired of being paid a high salary for nothing. Momentarily oblivious of the difficulties I would be in, once I gave up my job, I intimated my wish to resign to His Majesty and wrote to the Superintendent. An order sanctioning my resignation shortly arrived from Cuttack. My pay and allowances were reckoned up and paid me by the Ruler. In addition he gave me extremely generous travelling expenses, and parting gifts of shawls and silk outfits. The Queen and her sisters also gave me lavish gifts in money and clothing. I returned to Balasore with all this in the rains of 1887.

CHAPTER 18

A MANAGER'S POST IN KEONJHAR

(1887-1892)

(AGE 44-49)

I began feeling the pinch, soon after getting back to Balasore. There is a Santal saying that goes :

"The paddy ripens, the drums pulsate, and plump become our cheeks;

Along comes March, the paddy peters out, and off we slink to our dried-up creeks."

At harvest time the Santals ate well, distilling toddy from surplus rice and dancing the whole night through. The rice and toddy they downed plumped out their cheeks, or, in other words, they got fat : though only to grow thin again the following March, when their rice ran out. Then though things have been looking up for them the last few years for the next eight months they had to scrape by on what berries and roots they could glean from the jungle. I am of a similar spendthrift nature. In times of affluence the future gets scant heed from me.

The post of manager of Keonjhar fell vacant. I applied for it. The Maharja asked the Assistant Superintendent, Ray Nanda Kisora Bahadur for a testimonial on my character and competence. The appointment letter from the Maharaja and one from Nanda Kisora Babu advising me swiftly to present myself in Keonjhar arrived together. I accordingly made my way there.

The Maharaja of Keonjhar was then Dhananjaya Narayana Bhanja. A versatile man, he had at his finger-tips

all the details of his three-thousand-square-mile domain, including the characters of all his subjects. He was slender, articulate and busy from morning till night, supervising every aspect of the administration.

In the village of Dega two miles south of Anandpur stood the temple of Kusaleswar Mahadeva, erected by one of the independent kings of Orissa, Yayati Kesari. It had been threatened with engulfment by the Kusbhadra river, a tributary of the Brahmani. To protect it, the Maharaja had constructed a stone bund. Though stone and labour were cheap in that locality, the construction costs had almost topped one and a half lakhs of rupees. The bund was second in Orissa only to the Kathyodi in Cuttack. Keonjhar's immense Gundicha Temple of Baladevaji in Nijgarh was also built by the Maharaja, as also were various others.

I met the Maharaja in Anandpur. He stationed me there and returned to Nijgarh, about fifty-two miles away. I took up my duties as Manager in Anandpur on 10 December 1887 at a salary of one hundred rupees a month.

The court-house in Anandpur was on the north bank of the Baitarani. I had a broad belt of land round it cleared of jungle, killing in the process a number of cobras. One morning, while the labourers were hacking away at the jungle, an ahiraja snake drove a rabbit our way. The rabbit came bursting through the undergrowth and pelting towards the labourers. Then with the labourers to the front of it and the snake to its rear, it halted in momentary confusion. The snake's teeth instantly sliced into it, and it was dragged back into the undergrowth. When the land was cleared, I began constructing a garden planting flowers and roses in one part of it and fruit-trees, mangoes, lichis, plums and so forth, in the other.

The court-house office was chaotic. There was no proper registry. I had to reorganise everything from scratch. I instituted forms for such things as warrants and summonses, which I got printed in Balasore. A year later the Maharaja

granted me permission to set up a press of our own, where we began printing legal forms and leaflets for the court-houses in Anandpur and Nijgarh.

Shortly before my appointment as Manager of Keonjhar a criminal case had been instituted in Anandpur. The plaintiff was resident in Keonjhar district but the accused were from the Sukinda region of the Mughal-bandhi (i.e. the area of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore districts once administered by Mughals). These accused were detained by the officials in Anandpur for a few days and then on the Maharaja's orders were sent for trial to Jajpur, where not only were they acquitted, but a charge of unlawfully detaining subjects from the Mughal-bandhi was laid against the Anandpur officials. The case gradually progressed from the lower courts to the High Court in Calcutta, where I went to take charge of it. The High Court decided in favour of Keonjhar. The Maharaja was overjoyed and gave me a rise of twenty rupees. From June 1889 my salary was one hundred and twenty rupees a month.

The border between Keonjhar and Chota Nagpur had been long disputed. During my second year of office the Maharaja of Keonjhar and the Chief Commissioner of Nagpur received strict instructions to settle the matter. The Maharaja made me responsible for conducting the case and was pleased when I managed to restore to Keonjhar territory, which had previously been taken from it.

CHAPTER 19

PEASANTS' REVOLT IN KEONJHAR (1891-1892)

In 1891 during my fourth year of office a terrible revolt occurred.

For administrative purposes Keonjhar was divided into two regions, an eastern region centring on Anandpur and a western region centring on Nijgarh. Being traversed by the Baitarani River the Anandpur region was fertile. Comparatively flat and unforested, it constituted the pearl of Keonjhar, housing the prosperous farmers, businessmen and money-lenders. No subject from Keonjhar was involved in the revolt. The western region round Nijgarh was inhabited largely by Bhuiyans with a mere sprinkling of farmers.

As the official responsible for the Anandpur region, I was on tour in the rural areas and had pitched camp in a mango grove near the village of Nuagarh on the banks of the Baitarani about five miles from Anandpur. At about eleven o' clock at night having finished supper I was sitting in an armchair in front of the tent enjoying the cool breeze, when two runners arrived from the fort of Keonjhar bearing a secret communication from the Maharaja, giving a brief account of a peasants' revolt. I struck camp immediately and returned to Anandpur.

For the next three days I received two or three messages a day by runner from the Maharaja. Amongst other things the messages ordered me to despatch troops from Anandpur to Nijgarh. My work now consisted in getting up-to-the-minute reports from Nijgarh and mustering

troops to send there. Postal services between the head *kacheri* in Nijgarh and Anandpur were now suspended. The rebels had seized a whole day's mail and set up lookouts at strategic points along the road. The mail now came and went by secret runners through the forests.

At about nine p.m. on the third day I had finished my day's work and was about to dine when three elephants arrived at the *Kacheri* bearing the Maharaja, the Assistant Manager, Vicitrananda Dasa, and some loyal attendants. The elephants had covered fifty-two miles of trackless jungle, loaded with four passengers each, at top speed. They were almost dead. The condition of their passengers was even worse. It was the hot season. The sun had beat down on their heads. Every joint in their bodies had practically been jolted from its socket by the constant swaying of the elephants. They had not eaten a thing all day. They collapsed the moment they "dismounted." It took almost an hour's fanning to revive them. A meal had been prepared for the clerks and myself. We gave it to the Maharaja and his companions. An arrangement was swiftly made for the Maharaja. Then the Maharaja, two or three other people, and myself held a council of war. It was decided that I should go to Cuttack to notify the Superintendent of the revolt and bring Police assistance to apprehend the rebel leaders; and that meanwhile the Maharaja should stay in Anandpur.

I set out for Cuttack the following morning on elephant-back. I had to spend that night at the *kacheri* in Kantajhari in the Keonjhar region. At four o'clock on the afternoon of the second day I left my elephant at the Bundidiha lock near to the Brahmani River and boarded a steamer, which got me to Cuttack by nine o'clock on the morning of the third day. I first of all reported the whole situation to the Assistant Superintendent, Ray Nanda Kisora Dasa Bahadur, and then went to see the Superintendent, Mr. Toynbee.

When he had heard what I had to say, Mr. Toynbee flew into a rage. He was a very high official, yet he leapt

uncontrollably from his chair and paced the room ranting, 'Fine, good ! He's a tyrant ! He flouts Government orders ! Serves him right. I won't lift a finger to help him.' I saw clearly then, that he must have received a full report of the revolt from some other source. Since he had leapt from his chair and was pacing up and down so agitatedly, I found it very difficult to sit quiet, but I waited for a momentary pause, before saying calmly and politely, 'The Maharaja of Keonjhar had always been a loyal servant of the Government, your honour. You will find that fact amply documented, if you peruse the files. You say the Maharaja is a tyrant. I can state categorically that no one, neither a subject of Keonjhar, nor a complete outsider, can furnish one iota of evidence in support of that statement. The blame for this disturbance rests on the Bhuiyans alone. They are born troublemakers. It's in their nature to rebel occasionally. If the revolt were due to oppression on the Maharaja's part, it would be supported by the whole peasantry, whereas in fact the number of rebels is small. The Maharaja can suppress them with ease, but he is unwilling to act without your advice and assistance, for he looks upon you as a guardian. That's why he has sent me to see you. The Bhuiyans are hard-drinking, ignorant savages, who riot at the least provocation. The Maharaja wants no blood-shed. That's why he wants you to send a hundred constables to assist him. The savages will scatter at the sight of them and peace will be restored.'

Toynbee was silent. After reflecting a while, he said, 'Right, Babu, I'll send word to Superintendent Grice in Balasore district to bring a hundred constables to your assistance in Keonjhar. Now you can go.' I thanked him profusely, salaamed most respectfully and took my leave.

I apprised Nanda Kisora Babu of the outcome of my conversation with Toynbee and left Cuttack immediately. No sooner had I arrived in Tangi the following evening, when the Maharaja with a mere handful of attendants arrived there from Anandpur. He heard all the news from Cuttack and then decided that since he had come so far, he ought to go to Cuttack to see Toynbee. We reached Nanda Kisora's place the next day. After discussing various aspects of the

'situation we decided to telegraph a brief report of the revolt to the Lt. Governor and to Chief Secretary Cotton, requesting the assistance of armed police, while implying that the revolt was not serious. The armed police were required only to prevent blood-shed. Having sent the telegraph, we ought then to go to see Toynbee.

The Maharaja had come to Cuttack in only a shirt and dhoti. He had no other luggage. He declared that he would see Toynbee, dressed exactly as he was, in order to show him the state he was in, owing to the peasants. I tut-tutted the idea. 'The Saheb will conclude that you're a coward, who fled in terror from the peasants. You must talk confidently, giving the impression that you don't consider it a revolt.' The Maharaja, Nanda Kisora Babu and I were putting our heads together in private. My comments amused Nanda Kisora Babu. The Maharaja was to see the Saheb. Suitable clothes were needed. Nanda Kisora sent his orderly to fetch a tailor. The tailor took the Maharaja's measurements and was instructed to deliver the clothes by dusk that day.

After the tailor left, we resumed our deliberations in Nanda Kisora's study. Just then the honourable Madhusudan Dasa arrived. I saw him approaching and whispered to the Maharaja, 'We'd better include Madhu Babu in our discussion. There'll be a lot of work to be done in Cuttack. He could do it as our lawyer. His help and advice will be essential especially during the trial.' 'Yes,' Nanda Kisora said, turning to the Maharaja, 'that same point was on the tip of my tongue too.' Madhusudana Babu was therefore retained on behalf of Keonjhar and I gave him a full account of the revolt.

The next morning the Maharaja and I went to the Commissioner's home. Summoned to his private study, we saluted and, the moment we were seated, the Saheb, as if with an effort controlling his temper, said, bowing his head forward, 'Raja Saheb, you've abandoned the Queen. the

women and children to the tender mercies of the rebels and fled in fear to Cuttack. What kind of behaviour is this ? Before the Maharaja could reply, I quickly interposed, 'No, your honour, the fort is adequately guarded. The villages around it are also loyal. The rebels won't even be able to see the fort.' The Saheb glared at me. We discussed the revolt. The Governor and Chief Secretary had meanwhile replied to our telegraphs. It was finally decided that the order, by which Grice was to go to Keonjhar with a hundred constables, would be countermanded and instead Dawson Saheb would be instructed to go with two hundred military police via Chaibasa to protect the fort.

The Maharaja and I left Cuttack for Anandpur. After spending a day in Anandpur levying militia, we set out at midday that Saturday with three hundred militiamen (*paika*) for Nijgarh.

Before describing the revolt, one should briefly set down its causes. The Bhuiyans blindly believed that the kingdom of Keonjhar was theirs and that they had the right to depose kings and crown new ones. This delusion had already caused numerous revolts and was not entirely ungrounded. Originally Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar comprised one kingdom. It irked the Bhuiyans of Keonjhar to go to distant Mayurbhanj to present their grievances, so they kidnapped a child from the royal family of Mayurbhanj and set him on the throne of Keonjhar. There were no horses or elephants for the king's coronation, so two Bhuiyans got down on all fours and acted as horses and elephants to carry the kidnapped king majestically to his throne. When the new king was duly installed, a Bhuiyan, who had committed some imaginary offence, prostrated himself before the throne, and the king dangled a long sword above his neck, signifying the king's right to execute Bhuiyan offenders. Even now, whenever a new king ascends the throne of Keonjhar, all this is re-enacted.

The cause of the present revolt was a stream, called the Machakandana, which rose from the midst of a range

of low-lying hills south-west of Nijgarh and flowed north into the Baitarani River. The village of Nijgarh in Keonjhar lay in a mountain valley. If just the tip of the mountain at the side of the road leading to Nijgarh had been removed and a ditch cut eastwards, then instead of flowing north, the stream would have swept east towards Nijgarh.

I visited the Machakandana, when excavation work was being carried out on it. The stream greatly delighted me. It could, I thought, prove both profitable and salubrious for Nijgarh. There was a high mountain peak on each side of it. If a barrage were thrown across the northern end, its waters would form a kind of lake. Then if a channel were cut eastwards and sluices fitted, water could be drawn off for the village at will whenever needed. Thus the crops could always be saved, no matter how hard the drought. Furthermore, running eastwards from the foot of the mountain there was a canal-like ditch, which severed the village. The ditch filled only during the rains. At other times it was dry. Keeping it permanently filled would benefit the villagers greatly. They were constantly suffering from fever. I estimated that the total expenditure on my scheme would be Rs. 10,000. Babu Vicitrananda Dasa, the Assistant Manager of Keonjhar, was with me at the time. I told him of my ideas. When we returned the Maharaja asked Vicitrananda what I had had to say about the stream. All he said was, 'It'll cost us Rs. 10,000 to cut a channel.' 'All the Manager ever wants to do is to spend money,' the Maharaja testily commented. He did not seek my opinion and I did not vouchsafe it. The channel continued to be cut according to their wishes and seemed unlikely to benefit anyone.

On the Maharaja's instructions I ordered heavy steel shovels from Cuttack. To divert the waters of Machakandana to the fields of Nijgarh, a mountain peak was being removed and a channel cut. The engineer in charge was the Assistant Manager of Nijgarh Kacheri, Vicitrananda Dasa. He had been a secretary in Anandpur. He was extremely

hardworking. He kept at it from dawn to dusk without rest. In view of his efficiency the Maharaja had appointed him Assistant Manager in the Nijgarh region.

The Bhuiyan peasants were conscripted to dig the channel. Vicitrananda wanted them to be as hardworking as himself. They were set to, swinging thirty-pound shovels to smash the rock. It was no easy job. The least slacking earned a beating. They had to keep at it from dawn to dusk with only a two-hour midday break for dinner. Those who had brought rice with them cooked it and ate it. The poor chaps who had none at home went without and slept. That they should actually be given any was unthinkable. Goaded by this excessive hardship the Bhuiyans rebelled to a man, aiming to kill the Assistant Manager, Vicitrananda Dasa, and depose the Maharaja. Had they laid hands on him, Vicitrananda would certainly have been killed, but flight saved him.

The rebel leader was Dharanidhara. Dharanidhara was a Bhuiyan. The Maharaja had sent him as a child to study surveying in Cuttack, where during his schooling he had stayed in the Keonjhar Royal appartments. After passing his final examination he had entered the Royal Government of Keonjhar as a surveyor. Within a few months, however, he was proclaiming that the Maharaja was a tyrant; that he (Dharani) was the adopted son (*dharma putra*) of the Maharani; and that his mission was to establish justice in the realm. The Bhuiyan peasants were discontented with the Maharaja. The moment Dharani made his proclamation, the Bhuiyans accepted his authority and began looting the granaries of both the Maharaja and the non-Bhuiyan peasants, who disobeyed Dharani. They also seized and imprisoned a number of Police officials. Dharani was joined by a Bhuiyan from Singhbhum, named Mahapatra, who was intelligent and conversant with law. In view of the revolt's seriousness, the Maharaja had fled Nijgarh.

We left Anandpur at dawn and rested on the banks of a stream some eight miles further on. Now as we

marched along, at our head was the Maharaja's elephant, then mine and those of the clerks, followed by a line of militiamen. The militiamen were old, lifeless and possibly half-purblind. After all, what able-bodied youth ever volunteered to serve a king as an unpaid conscript? Those who volunteered were the sick and the infirm, who were incapable of useful work at home. Besides there was a rebellion going on. The Government had issued orders to report with swords and rifles. There was slaughter afoot. Was the young, working son of the house to go and get himself killed? Let the old man go instead. These aged warriors had double, tattered, homespun cloths or towels wrapped round their heads, rifles five feet in length and twenty pounds in weight, swords at their waist, staffs in their hands and bundles of cooking pots and a couple of weeks' supply of rice strapped to their backs. Such was the dress of these swashbuckling heroes who came hobbling on their sticks and groping their way along this dark and difficult path. They had been trudging through the jungle the whole night long and were on their last legs. Through stumbling the toes of many of them were torn and bleeding. But day dawned that day as it did every other, and we felt as if we had suddenly emerged from an endless night of torment into a pleasant land. Since dusk the day before we had not seen each other's faces and no words had passed our lips. So now as we looked at each other hope seemed reborn in our hearts.

At eight o' clock on the morning of Sunday, 13 May 1891, we arrived in Ghatgaon, a village on the Keonjhar road. The Maharaja and his attendants retired to the official residence. Separate accommodation had been prepared for me. The militiamen lay in a mango grove by the roadside. The headmen from the neighbouring village had been given advance notice to lay on rations and cooking facilities, so after we had all rested a while, a meal began being cooked for us. The Maharaja was determined that, no matter how hard or long we had to march, we would arrive at the Fort before dawn the following day.

At roughly 11 a.m. the Maharaja was just about to

dine, when two runners arrived with a message from Nijgarh. They had been struggling all night through the jungle and over the mountains to get to us. I took the message and read it to the Maharaja. Its gist was : 'At six o' clock today Saturday, 12 May, the Fort was surrounded by almost five hundred Bhuiyans, who attempted to force entry. We fired on them from the walls. They fled and are now camping in the village of Raisua.' 'Mahout !' the Maharaja cried, the moment he heard the message, 'prepare my elephant.' He left for Anandpur immediately. I did not, however. I resolved to press on to the Fort to protect the lives and honour of the Maharani, Princes and Princesses. Before the Maharaja left, I got him to give me written orders authorising me to kill Bhuiyans, if attacked.

I have described the virility of the soldiers I was leading into battle. I now inspected their weapons and despaired even more. Two-thirds of their rifles were split, cracked or broken. As for powder and shot, their powder horns, that is to say the coconuts containing their powder, which hung below their waists at the back, contained sufficient for one or two shots, four at most. Almost all their swords were rusty and cracked. 'Sir', they explained, 'we were ordered to report so suddenly we didn't have time to prepare powder or shot'. I cannot understand what prompted me to advance with such troops and equipment. It must have been a mental aberration on my part.

We set out from Ghatgaon and towards nightfall arrived in the village of Basantpur. Between us and Nijgarh lay a mountain range traversed by a narrow pass, which frightened me greatly; for a handful of men standing in concealment each side the pass could easily hold back a hundred. I had an inkling the Bhuiyans were lying in wait there and did not dare advance, without having the place reconnoitred. I send the police officer (*phaujdar*) from Basantpur on ahead to reconnoitre it. He was a Government employee. I did not realise at the time that he had thrown in his lot with the Bhuiyans. Two hours later he returned and reported the pass clear. There was not even a single Bhuiyan this side, he said.

Night had fallen and the militiamen were worn out. I did not feel like marching through the pass in the dark. Meanwhile I had received from the Fort a reply to one of my letters : the militia there were unable to send help. But at any rate the pass was clear and the Fort was only ten miles away. We would set out for it the following day.

I issued orders that we were to stay the night where we were. The militiamen stripped off their packs and began cooking in a mango grove on the banks of a stream called the Kanijora to the west of the village of Basantpur. I decided to turn in beneath a big mango tree. This was where I made my mistake. I had to suffer for it later. If I had pressed on then, I should by midnight have arrived safely at the Fort. Yet at the critical moment I did the opposite. The police officer from Basantpur, whom I had sent to find out whether or not the pass was clear, informed the Bhuiyan sentry in the pass of the number of troops I had, the state of their equipment, and when I should set out for the Fort. The sentry then dashed to Raisua and informed Dharani. Dharani mustered his men from Raisua and other villages and sent them all to the pass to trap me. They deployed in ambush all up the mountain-side on both sides of the pass, armed with rifles, swords and bows and arrows. The pass had frightened me from the start, because an enemy concealed there behind trees and bushes would be able to fire on people moving along the road at the foot of the pass, whilst from below they would be powerless to retaliate; for the narrowness of the road would hinder their presenting a fully-deployed front to the enemy.

At dawn I sent the police officer from Basantpur to reconnoitre the pass again and ordered the militiamen to prepare to march. It took an hour to accoutre the troops and elephants. The sun had risen, it was fully daylight, and we had crossed the Kanijora and advanced a little beyond it, when the Basantpur police officer returned and reported the pass deserted. 'Proceed at your leisure,' he said and promptly disappeared into the forest. I searched for him in the rear, though without success. At ease

and relaxed, we made our way forward. No sooner had we reached the foothills, when for several minutes the whole mountain range resounded with rifle-shots and shouting. My elephant was at the head of the column. Startled too, it halted. The mountains on both flanks and to my front seemed swarming with men. I later realised that there had not been as many men and rifle-shots as I had assumed. The reverberating echoes from the hollows in the mountain-sides had misled me; for in the pass a single shot sounded like ten.

For a moment I sat wondering what to do. Then standing the militiamen where they were, I galloped up and down looking for a suitable spot, intending, if possible, to position the militia on a wooded rise, where we might defend ourselves. When luck is against you, nothing turns out right. Being but thinly forested, the whole area was visible to the enemy. There was noting I could do. I was in complete despair. Though by galloping forward I could easily have escaped to Anandpur, I should have been ashamed at, abandoning my troops to the enemy. I retreated to the mango grove and was just drawing up the militiamen in defensive order, when the Bhuiyans came and surrounded us. The number encircling us was small. They could easily have been beaten off, but in view of the large concentration of Bhuiyans nearby my confidence flagged. 'You must come with us to Dharani Babu,' the Bhuiyans said, as they approached me. Without protest I mounted my elephant and set out with my whole entourage.

Basaghār at the foot of Baratasi Hill and west of Basantpur was one of the main Bhuiyan posts. It was commanded by Dharanidhara's brother, Gopalia, who was also commander-in-chief of the Bhuiyans. I had seen him six months previously at the jail in Nijgarh. He had been chained to a stake with an iron band round his leg. Gopalia was a giant of a man, massively built, fat and terrifying to look at. His muscles were as hard as iron, his chest was broad, his face flat, massive and ugly. His eyes were minute, and he was as strong as an ox. The lout was as cruel and vicious as he was stupid. He was sitting on a stone with

unsheathed swords and arrows piled round him. Numerous Bhuiyans stood in attendance upon him, armed with axes, arrows and unsheathed swords. As soon as I arrived, he glared at me for a long time with his small, blood-shot eyes, and I stood before him a prisoner, observing the expression on his face and his alarming appearance. After a while he ordered me to accompany him to Dharanidhara in Raisua.

I mounted the elephant and he sat beside me, holding a naked sword in each hand. 'Do you have a pistol?' he asked. 'No,' I replied. 'Right,' he said, 'then listen to me, I'm warning you, if you attempt to escape to the Fort I'll hack you to pieces.' Then he bound his axe and swords to his waist and loaded his bow. We then set out for Raisua with an escort of fifty or sixty Bhuiyans. Group after group of people passed us on route, bound for Basaghlar and Raisua. Whenever our guard saw anyone approaching from the front, he called out, 'Take care.' If the newcomer replied, 'Take care.', then he was ordered to clear the way. The Bhuiyans had this password : if they called 'Take care!' and received the reply 'Take care!', they knew that the other person was one of them. If not, he was a stranger. When we were about halfway there, a dreadful person loaded his bow and called to me, 'Vicitrananda Babu made me work from morning till night with nothing to eat, you know. Now I'll kill you for it, sure as sure.' He took aim and drew back the string. One more second and death was certain, but a man dashed up from behind and seized the archer's wrist.

We arrived in Raisua at about three o' clock. The moment I dismounted, Dharanidhara rushed up and said, 'Prostrate yourself. Prostrate yourself before me.' I hesitated. Weeping anxiously, my cook came dashing up from behind and, embracing me, cried, 'Please, prostrate yourself, Sir.' Instead of prostrating myself, however, I merely saluted. Dharanidhara seized my hand and set me down beside his bed. It was almost sunset. I was given permission to bathe and eat.

I was given a shelter to sleep in close to Dharani's hall of audience. Its internal dimensions were seven feet six inches by seven feet six inches. The walls and roof consisted

of interwoven sal wood saplings. The stars were visible through the foliage. It had rained some days previously. The ground inside was still damp. A group of Bhuiyans armed with unsheathed swords guarded the entrance. There were guards at the back as well. I was tired out. My servant spread my bedding on the damp ground. After dusk I ate and went to bed. Shortly after I lay down, I began being bitten by ants, which were swarming onto me. I had not realised that an ant-column had been marching across the damp earth. Sleep was impossible. My whole body was on fire. I spent the night rubbing myself and driving ants from my bed.

The following morning Dharanidhara held court. Bhuiyans began assembling. There was great rejoicing throughout the whole Bhuiyan domains over my capture. All the leading Bhuiyans attended the court. Seating me beside him, Dharani asked, 'Well. Phakirmohana Babu, what do you intend to do ?' Quick as a flash I retorted, 'If you keep me on as manager, I'll stay here. Otherwise, I'll go home.' Turning to the Bhuiyans, Dharani asked, 'What do you think ?' 'No', they replied unanimously. 'He shouldn't be kept on. He's on the Maharaja's side.' No final decision on my appointment as manager could be reached that day. After a discussion of other matters the court was dismissed. That night I was again troubled by ants and went without sleep.

At the opening of the court on the second day the question of my appointment as manager was raised. When the majority of Bhuiyans objected to my appointment, the Maharani's son, Dharanidhara, said, 'How am I to manage such a large kingdom without an intelligent capable man to advise me ?' All the Bhuiyans agreed. I was appointed Minister. The letter of appointment was signed : 'Maharani's son, Dharanidhara'; as indeed were all documents. As a salary I was permitted to enjoy seven mana (acres) of land tax-free. It was now my third night in Raisua. I had been unable to sleep for the last two. After much begging and pleading I managed to secure from the headman of Raisua an old,

worn-out, rope bedstead. The servant spread my bedding on it. Then he prepared my hooka and handed it to me. The moment I applied my lips to the tube, the brazier came off, depositing flaming particles all over head and body, burning, and blistering me in several places. Troubles do not come in ones, I thought.

It was proclaimed that I was Dharanidhara's Minister. He trusted me implicitly, never failing to accept my advice on the kingdom's administration. He had been accorded divine status. From a different village each day parties of maidens came blowing conches and ululating to worship him. Dharanidhara would stretch out his legs to them and they would wash them in turmeric water and then make flower offerings to them. When they had finished worshipping Dharani's feet, they came to wash and worship mine for as Minister I too possessed venerable feet. But I saluted them and said, 'You're my mother. Don't touch my feet. I'm but a servant. There's no need to worship them.'

It was intolerable to Gopalia and Mahapatra that Dharani should take my advice and eat betelnut with me. Mahapatra longed to imprison me in a Bhuiyan village on the mountains. But they were unable to do anything for fear of Dharani. Finally Mahapatra and some other Bhuiyans secretly plotted to kidnap me during Dharani's absence and take me to the jungle. In fact, they actually encircled me one day about to do so. Getting wind of it, however, Dharani came dashing up and released me.

After my appointment as Minister, the Bhuiyans gave their attention to another matter. Stored in the palace were many lakhs of rupees. The Bhuiyan aim was now to seize that money and capture the royal family and its attendants. They began preparing rows of shelters at the foot of the hills. After all, if housing were not prepared in advance, where were the prisoners to stay after their capture? The Court decided that one morning with axes and swords at their waists and rifles and spears in their hands five thousand huntsmen were to assemble in Raisua. From there they were all to rush the Palace, smash and burn its walls, break in and

seize the occupants. I sat listening in my shelter. When it was all settled, Dharani sent for me and asked my opinion. 'Listen,' I said, 'there is a lot of money in that treasury. We must take it. How can we manage without it?' Interrupting at this point, they all shouted in chorus : 'He's right ! He's right !' Then I said: 'There are two or three hundred troops standing at the walls. If they open fire, three hundred people coming at them from outside will be 'goners' immediately. And one shot from the cannon at the Fort entrance will put paid to another five hundred. The chiefs will be in front, you know. They'll be the ones, who die first.' The Bhuiyan chiefs had been listening in silence. They sighed and said : 'Then what can be done ?' 'We'll hide on the mountain-side,' I said, 'and sling dynamite bombs onto the Fort. Each bomb will demolish one of the walls and blow to smithereens the troops sitting behind them. There's none of that stuff here. It's to be had in Calcutta. We need a score of bombs. Let's send to Calcutta and buy a hundred. A hundred's enough to blow up this mountain, let alone those mud walls'.

It was decided that someone should go to Calcutta to buy a hundred bombs. A thousand rupees were needed. To raise the money, demands were to be issued on all rich tenants. A couple of clerks sat down to write them. Thousands and thousands were to be written and each to be signed : 'Maharani's son, Dharanidhara'. It was no easy matter to be polished off in half a day. The clerks were at it morning and night. And I sat supervising them.

The Government had issued orders for troops to come and protect the Keonjhar Fort. They still had not come. How much longer was I to hold back the Bhuiyans ? If this lot managed one day to get into the Fort, the property and prestige of the royal family would be finished. The Maharaja must be informed. But how was I to know where he was ? How was I to get word to him ? A plan occurred to me. Babu Bholanatha De from Balasore was Surveyor in the Anandpur *kacheri*. If I got news to him, he would inform the Maharaja, no matter where he was. Dharani, as I said

earlier, was very fond of chewing betelnut. He always came to chew mine. I went and told him that the supplies I had brought with me had run out. There was none to be had there. But if I wrote to Bholanath De in Bhadrak, he would quickly send some. Furthermore, I had a sugar-cane field in Bhadrak. I was away. The cane would die, if it were not watered. With Dharani's permission I would write to my storeman to water the crop.

'Yes, yes,' Dharani said, 'go ahead and write'.

I give below a copy of the letter I wrote:

Raisua
16 may, 1891

To

Bholanatha, the storekeeper,

The Maharani's son urgently requires one hundred leaves of betel and two hundred betelnuts. Send them immediately.

You must also dig a ditch from the north to irrigate the sugar-cane plot, otherwise the crop will be ruined.

Phakirmohana Senapati

I read the letter to the 'Maharani's son', and he signed the pass. Between Nijgarh and Anandpur three or four sentry posts had been established. No one could get through without a pass signed by the 'Maharani's son'. At Pani pass travellers were even searched. I entrusted the letter to four sturdy militiamen and round the sacred thread of one of them, a Khandayata, I wrapped three small pieces of soda bottle wire. They were prisoners on their way home. They rushed to Anandpur without pausing to rest. The Maharaja was in Anandpur.

The militiamen placed the three wires in his hand. He read the letter and looked at the three wires and interpreted them to everyone as follows: with the three wires the Manager was signifying that the Government, the Superintendent in Cuttack and a third person, either Nanda Kisora

or Madhu Babu, be notified by telegraph; 'betel leaf' meant 'soldiers' and 'betel-nut' meant 'bullets'; i.e. 'riflemen'; 'sugar-cane field' meant 'Fort'; so the letter meant, 'Unless troops come quickly from the north, i.e. Raisua, the Fort will be looted and destroyed.'

Meanwhile I was eagerly awaiting the troops. I had won over lots of Bhuiyan chiefs, though not Mahapatra. He observed all I did and said. But I did not let on I knew he was suspicious. Gopalia ground his teeth in anger whenever he saw me. He longed to cut my tall throat.

There were Bhuiyan spies everywhere. On the morning of my eighth day of captivity, one reported that a Government column had reached Jayantigarh. That afternoon Police Subinspector Babu Sasibhusan Ray, a gentleman from Singhbhum, brought a message to 'Maharani's son', Dharanidhara, from the column's commander, Captain Dawson. The Captain desired an interview with Dharani. The 'Maharani's son' cut the message to shreds on his sword-point and threw it away. Meanwhile I sat Sasibhusan beside me and got him to tell me the number of troops in the Government column, the Captain's intentions, and when he would get to Raisua. In return I told him briefly about the situation in Raisua. A few hours later another message arrived for Dharani from the Police Superintendent of Balasore District, who was then in Ghatgaon on the road to Anandpur. This message also requested an interview with Dharani. It too was torn up.

On the ninth day runners reported that four Sahebs were approaching on horseback leading a large number of armed sepoys.

'What are we to do?' Dharani asked.

'There's no cause for alarm,' I replied. 'You're the Empress's son. These sahebs are the Empress's servants. They're coming to pay their respects. You ought to welcome them on Her Imperial Majesty's behalf.'

The 'Empress's son' prepared to welcome them. He donned his best red dhoti, a splendid hat embroidered in gold and silver thread, looted from a merchant in the west, and took up an unsheathed sword. Ten Bhuiyans armed with axes and bows escorted him. A bony old nag belonging to the headman of Raisua was grazing in the open nearby. It was seized, saddled with a blanket, haltered with a knotted old flaxen rope, and mounted by Dharani, holding in to his shoulder his unsheathed sword, with which I had taught him how to salute the Sahebs.

I was unable to beguile Mahapatra, however. The bullying scoundrel was not unintelligent. He made off into the jungle.

I stood staring into the distance towards Jayantigarh. Dharani had been holding me prisoner with about two hundred of my militiamen. I ordered them to prepare to go to the Fort. An hour later I saw Dharani surrounded by six armed sepoys. His horse and sword had been removed. To his front and rear rode four uniformed Sahebs, and behind them in the distance I could see a column of troops approaching. Upon their arrival in the grove of Raisua the Sahebs set fire to Dharani's shelters. My elephant was prepared. The Sahebs moved off to the Fort with the troops and prisoner. we followed on. An hour after our arrival at the Fort we heard rifle fire from Basaghlar pass. Fighting had broken out when the Bhuiyans impeded Grice's path. Mounting casualties caused the Bhuiyans to flee, and Grice and the Maharaja arrived at the Fort.

Accompanied by only his steward, Mr. Toynbee, the Superintendent of the Feudatory States, came to Keonjhar by a circuitous route involving a steamer passage from Cuttack to Chandbali, a road journey to Calcutta, a rail journey to Chakradharpur and finally an elephant ride to the Fort. His purpose was to try the offences of Dharani and four of his lieutenants, who had been captured. Two charges were preferred against them : firstly, attempting to make war on a state friendly to Government; and secondly, the unlawful detention of the chief official of the State of Keonjhar.

Toynbee demanded from the Maharaja a written report on the causes and instigators of the revolt. The chief secretary (sirastadar) of the Maharaja's *kacheri* eagerly sought permission to draft it. I was greatly relieved, because I was on the go from morning till night. From dawn till 10 a.m. I had to see to the provisioning of the officers, soldiers, and other guests. Keonjhar was packed with people at the time because of the elephants, militiamen and officials, who had come from allied states like Dhenkanal, Bamra and Singhbhum to assist in the emergency. Then from 10 a.m. till dusk I was Clerk of Court to the Superintendent. And finally from dusk to 10 p.m. I was Manager of Keonjhar at the court of the Maharaja. Another job on top of that would have been the final turning of the screw.

Early the next morning the chief secretary placed a sheaf of papers before the Maharaja and, turning to me, said, 'I neither ate nor slept last night, Sir. I sat and wrote the whole night through.'

It was the plain truth. It would have been impossible to fill seven four-column sheets without writing the whole night through. At the Maharaja's request I began reading what he had written. My patience gave out halfway through. Heavens above ! It was a compendium of bits and pieces from *Canakya*, the *Bhagavata*, and the *Ramayana*, not to mention profuse illustrations from historical and geographic treatises too.

'This is absolutely useless,' I said turning to the Maharaja. 'Let me write it.'

'Right, go ahead' was his immediate reply.

I glanced at the chief secretary. He was trembling, and his eyes were red with anger. Time was getting on. It had gone nine o'clock. The report had to be submitted by ten. I sat down and wrote the report there and then. I proved with incontrovertible evidence that the causes of the revolt were the craziness of Dharanidhara and the peculiar make-up of the Bhuiyans. I read the report to the Maharaja, and he signed it. Although there were some crossings-out,

there was no time to make a fair copy. In any case there was no need, since the author of the report was the Manager of Keonjhar and its reader in court would be Toynbee's Clerk of Court; i.e. myself. Meanwhile the chief secretary determined to make trouble for me.

The report was asked for, the moment I arrived in court. I had no sooner started reading it in accordance with the Hakim's instructions, when Toynbee burst out angrily, 'I'm damned sure you wrote this. It's one of your tricks. I'll jail you for it, if it's the last thing I do'.

I could not retaliate. I was in no position to get angry or resign. I just suffered in silence. It seemed to me that Toynbee aimed, if possible, to depose the Maharaja on a plea of incompetence during the recent revolt and install his friend, Mr. Walley, as Manager of Keonjhar. He was angry with me for trying to prove the Maharaja's innocence. In the course of the inquiry all the witnesses declared that the Bhuiyans were to blame for the revolt. So there was no hope of Toynbee's scheme coming off.

The Superintendent left Nijgarh for Cuttack taking the prisoners with him. During a one-day halt at Anandpur he held the final hearing and passed judgement. Dharani was sentenced to five years' hard labour. The remaining accused were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for periods ranging from two to three years.

Mr. Toynbee took me with him to Bhadrak. On the third day after our arrival there, orders came from the Lt Governor in Darjeeling. Mr. Walley also came to Bhadrak from Mayurbhanj. In Mr. Walley's presence I was ordered to write to the Maharaja telling him to come to Bhadrak on the receipt of the letter, otherwise the Police would come and fetch him. I wrote the letter, and Mr. Toynbee signed it. I was then given my instructions. Mr. Walley was returning to Mayurbhanj. Thus he would be delayed in coming to Keonjhar. I was to take charge of the Fort until he arrived. I signified my assent. The Maharaja was annoyed with me for writing such an offensive letter, threatening that the Police

would fetch him, if he did not immediately set out from the Fort. He showed the letter to Nanda Kisora Babu and many other gentlemen. He even told Chief Secretary, Cotton about it. The idea of my taking charge of the Fort during his absence did not appeal to him in the slightest. None of this had entered my head when I agreed to follow Mr. Toynbee's instructions. The following day Mr. Toynbee left for Cuttack and Mr. Walley for Baripada. I returned to Keonjhar.

At this time of the year in Keonjhar the Car Festival was generally celebrated with great splendour. I secured from Mr. Toynbee permission for the Maharaja to stay in Keonjhar till the end of the festivities. The Car Festival was held. Bhuiyan men and women and other villagers came to see it. Bhuiyan girls used to bring aprons full of burs to throw at Bhuiyan boys, who to protect themselves came with bodies smeared in oil. They all found this highly amusing.

The Car Festival ended, so did the Return Festival. The Maharaja gave me some timely advice and left for Cuttack. About a fortnight later Mr. Walley arrived at the Fort of Keonjhar from Baripada. Before leaving Keonjhar I explained the revenue system to him and gave him charge of the Fort.

Orissa's foremost lawyer, Babu Madhusudana Dasa, went to Calcutta on behalf of the Maharaja of Keonjhar and in the Court of the Lt. Governor refuted all the charges relating to the revolt, which had been brought against the Maharaja by Mr. Toynbee, thus establishing his client's innocence. The Lt. Governor declared his intention of coming to Keonjhar to conduct a full on-the-spot inquiry. In the event, however, he came only as far as Cuttack and settled the affair there. The Maharaja was permitted to return to his capital. The Lt. Governor was then Sir Charles Elliot, K. C. S. I.

I received a letter from the Superintendent in Cuttack telling me to go to see the Lt. Governor in Bhadrak. I met

the Lt. Governor in the dak bungalow there. I presented myself to him. He stood with me a moment and all he said was : 'How are you ? When did you get here ?' Then he went to see the jails. Behind him was Chief Secretary Cotton (Sir Henry Cotton). He talked with me for five or six minutes about Keonjhar, the Bhuiyans and my captivity. Then he let me go.

Having concluded their business in Bhadrak, the Sahebs went their separate ways. Mr. Walley had borrowed nineteen elephants to transport his things from Keonjhar. He handed them over to me and left for Mayurbhanj.

On my way back from Bhadrak to Keonjhar, my mind was teeming with depressing thoughts, when it suddenly occurred to me that the names of all the writers and prominent personalities in Orissa ought to be recorded in literature. But then I thought that a mere string of names would not make interesting reading. I wanted a thumbnail sketch of their idiosyncracies too. Still seated on the elephant, I reached in my pocket, took out my notebook and pencil, and began writing verses. By the time I reached Anandpur it was already half-finished. The moment I dismounted, I called the compositors and gave it to them to set up. After a brief rest I resumed writing. The compositors kept on coming to fetch the rest sheet by sheet as I wrote. By about ten that night it was all written. Within two days the Maharaja would arrive in Anandpur and I should have to leave. The printing would have to be finished by then. The compositors knew this. I stayed with them urging them on. By dusk on the second day the printing was finished. The first edition of my *Utkala Bhramana* (Orissan Tour) had been published.

I now need briefly to record the reasons for my leaving Anandpur and for the rift between the Maharaja and myself. The Maharaja had been greatly displeased by my staying on to work under Mr. Walley after his deposition. Prior to that there had been two main officials in Anandpur : the Assistant Manager and myself, the Manager. This

Assistant Manager was the son of the former Dewan, a local man named Nanda Dhala, who had been assassinated by Bhuiyan rebels at the time of the Maharaja's accession. The Dhala family, therefore, enjoyed the Maharaja's special favour. So the Assistant Manager had been a particular favourite of his. Both of us had stayed on to work under the new Manager, Mr. Walley. The Assistant Manager turned against me two months later, when dismissed by Mr. Walley, whose displeasure he had excited in various ways. He wrongly supposed that I had had a hand in his dismissal. When informed of the dismissal in Cuttack, the Maharaja was exceedingly annoyed, especially when my arch-enemy, the chief secretary, pointed out that I had engineered it. The Maharaja's former affection for me froze. He used once to consult me on all important state affairs. But those days were done with. In troubled times a friend appears to be a foe or vice-versa. I began suffering recurring bouts of fever. My pet dog, an adorable creature, died. My wife and child encircled by hostile relatives in Balasore were undergoing hardship. When I was seized and captured by the Bhuiyans, it was rumoured in Balasore and throughout Orissa that the Bhuiyans had slaughtered me. Hearing this, my wife had fasted. The third cause of the rift with the Maharaja was the large number of complaints posted by the peasants of Anandpur to the Lt. Governor and the Superintendent. The Maharaja believed that I had some secret hand in them. I realised that there was no hope of retaining my post in Anandpur. Even if the Maharaja did not dismiss me, my staying-on would be neither beneficial nor safe. So I got ready to resign and return to Balasore, the moment the Maharaja arrived. I later learnt that he had already hired my replacement and was bringing him with him from Cuttack.

The Lt. Governor had appointed Ray Nanda Kisora Dasa Bahadur as Political Agent for Keonjhar. The Maharaja, Madhusudana Dasa and the Political Agent now arrived at Anandpur. The day after their arrival in the presence of the Political Agent I handed over responsibility

for the Office and Treasury and at midnight departed from Anandpur.

I was popular with people of all walks of life in Anandpur. They did not come today Goodbye to me for fear of the Maharaja. Nevertheless, parties from distant villages came and sat secretly waiting for me in the woods at the road side in the darkness of the night. As my elephant approached, they emerged from the woods at both sides of the road to salute me. They did not say anything. They just heaved a sigh and gazed at me. But the event is deeply imprinted on my heart and I shall remember their effection and sympathy to the end of my days. And when I left Daspalla too, scores of people followed me in the darkness through the jungle for miles just to bid me farewell. A vexatious tax known as the stove-tax had been levied on poor widows in Anandpur. By dint of innumerable petitions I had managed to get it abolished. So the widows honoured me like a father, and sometimes they came in groups to pay their respects.

Towards dawn the elephant set me down in Basantia on the borders of the Maharaja's domain and turned back. The Maharaja had ordered me to be escorted to this point. His general factotum in Basantia, Gori Maikapha, had arranged a palanquin for me. This was an act of courage on his part : he was vulnerable because he held the excise lease for the Keonjhar region. But the noble Maharaja did nothing against him.

In leaving Anandpur I was grieved by only two things. In the villages far from the Baitarani river severe water shortages occurred in the hot season. During my winter tours of the rural areas I had begun getting the tenants to dredge the old tanks (small reservoirs). I had wanted gradually to dredge them all. Now that desire would remain unfulfilled. Secondly, I had wanted to build a school in Anandpur town. I had even raised money for it. That project too had now to lapse.

While I was in Anandpur, my cousin, Nityananda Senapati, went on pilgrimage with his wife and died at Swargadwar in Ajodhya. His widow returned home. She greatly wished to live separately outside our united family, which thereupon broke up into three separate units. My cousin's son, Radhamohana Senapati, and my nephew, Lalamohana Senapati, separated from me. Our property was also shared out and our family home partitioned into three equally sized apartments.

CHAPTER 20
DEWAN AGAIN IN DOMAPARA
(1894-1896)
(AGE 51-53)

Receiving a telegraph from the King of Domapara, Vrajendra Kumara Manasinha Bhramarabara Raya, in the first half of 1894 I travelled by steamer via Chandabali to Cuttack, where the King appointed me State Dewan on a salary of Rs. 120 a month. He knew both English and Sanskrit, but since his accession had abandoned his studies and now read only medicine. His nature was extremely simple, his character immaculate, but his mind far from independent. He was constantly swayed by others, and too indolent to interest himself in the affairs of the Fort. Indeed, he disliked even living there and preferred Cuttack, which meant his living costs were high. His late father had once been obliged to borrow sixty thousand rupees, but before he died he had practically repaid it. On going to I discovered that the present king had already managed to inflate the slight remaining debt to a solid quarter of a lakh.

Some months after my arrival in Domapara the Queen Mother died. The King performed her last rites with great pomp. Shortly after the Queen Mother's death the Queen also died. And within a few months there came to Domapara news of the death of the King's maternal grandmother, Queen of Tikkali, Radhika Pata Mahadei, in Puri, where she had gone with her remaining two daughters. I went to Tikkali on Domapara behalf to witness the Queen's last rites and sojourned there for the following six months. Having nothing else to do, I hired a teacher and studied Telugu.

The Queen's death brought me direct, irrefutable proof of the truth of Hindu astrology. The Queen had been pregnant. Her labour duly commenced. I called in an astrologer from Khurda to find out in advance whether it would be a boy or a girl, and in either case to get the birth-chart recorded. This astrologer was widely acclaimed in Domapara and neighbouring states. When he arrived, I asked whether it would be a boy or a girl. He sat down before me, took the Queen's birth-chart and, chalking on the floor, did his calculations. I sat and watched. No one else was there. When he had finished, he put down his chalk, gazed at me lugubriously, and said, 'I'm sorry, but the Queen will die.' 'But there's nothing the matter with her,' I exclaimed, 'except normal labour pains.' 'Nevertheless,' he stated, 'eight planets are against her. The ninth can't save her.' He took his leave and returned to his quarters. Round about ten that night I went to him for a further bulletin. 'The predominance of hostile planets will persist till morning,' he said. 'The Queen would be safe, if she could get through the night, but she won't be able to.' Another odd thing happened that day. Since early in the morning a jackal had been coming to the Lion's Gate, throwing back its head and howling. When driven from there, it came to the Garden Gate and howled; and when driven from there, returned to howling at the Lion's Gate. Such howling is described in the *Utpata Sagara* (Book of Portents) as ominous. Towards dawn when the wild cocks were beginning to cry, a dreadful howling brought me scurrying to the Palace. Standing at the door of the confinement room and peering in, I saw the floor awash with blood. The Queen was fading. Her new-born daughter, then alive, was to survive her for but a fortnight. The midwife did not know how to cut the cord. It ulcerated, and death ensued.

Some months later I suffered one of life's hardest knocks. Astrologers calculated that my wife Krsnakumari Dei, would not live beyond her thirty-fourth year, because of the ever more powerful concentration of the Lord of Death upon her chart. At her entry upon her thirty-fourth year she developed chronic indigestion. All treatment

sailed. Even the lightest foods proved indigestible for her. She finally took to her bed and at four o'clock on the afternoon of the tenth day of the bright fortnight in Bhadra (August-September) in the year 1816 (i.e. 1894 A.D.) she died.

In infancy I lost my parents. Later on I lost my saviour and protectress, my grandmother, Kuchila Dei. Never did I enjoy the sympathy of friends and relations. I was twenty-nine when I married for the second time, and Krsnakumari was only twelve, but from that day forth my welfare was all she ever wanted or worked for. It is almost twenty-four years since she died, but my empty heart still guards its sacred memories of her. I have no one now to tell my troubles to. Whenever anguish engulfs me, I sit by her grave in the garden, and comfort comes.

It was mainly because of my wife that I learnt to write poetry. She was very fond of listening to mine. Originally I wrote to cheer her up, but since she died I have written to solace my own sorrows. Almost all my poetry has been written in sickness, trouble or distress. My wife used to read bits of my published *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* every morning after her bath.

When my wife died, my son was thirteen and my daughter eleven. I did not dare to leave them with my hostile relations in Balasore, and if I had taken them to Domapara, their education would have suffered, so, deciding to leave them in Cuttack, I took them there by Chandbali steamer. My good friend, the deeply devout Madhusudan Rao, offered to put them up. He was Superintendent of the Normal School in Cuttack and had quarters at the School. I gave him Rs. 100 for their keep for the following three months and went to Domapara. They stayed with him a year. After that I rented a separate house for them.

Shortly after the last rites of the Queen of Domapara had been performed, pleaders started turning up from various places with proposals for the King's second marriage.

The late Queen had been the daughter of the King of Parikud. Her youngest sister was still a spinster. A pleader turned up with letters for both His Majesty and myself from this King of Parikud proposing a marriage with his youngest daughter. Shortly afterwards the King of Khallikota's pleaders also turned up : this King's youngest sister was unmarried. The King of Domapara's relatives were all in favour of this match, for in both castes and lineage none came higher than the House of Khallikota. I went and more or less accepted their proposal. I was staying in Cuttack at the time. One morning the Manager of Kanika turned up with Nrpendra Narayan Bhanja Deo, the ex-King of Kanika. Two days later the Manager invited me to the Cuttack residence of the King of Kanika. There the venerable old Queen told me how pleased she would make me, if I could bring off a match between her daughter and the King of Domapara, 'I should indeed be pleased,' I replied, 'if I could bring it off.' On another occasion the Manager told me that the old Queen would pay off my King's debts of twenty-five thousand rupees, if the match were arranged. When informed of this, the King replied, 'I have no objection to whatever arrangement you make'.

The news of the Kanika match upset the relatives of the King of Domapara alarmingly. They had got wind that the Kanika bride was not of royal blood, she descended from some obscure Khandayata family in Puri district and had merely been raised by Her Royal Highness, the Queen of Kanika. The King of Domapara was a Kshatriya. They feared the King would lose caste by the marriage. Ignoring all protests I accepted the Kanika proposal.

On the morning of the day before the wedding the King performed the requisite memorial service in honour of his ancestors (the Nandimukha ceremony) at the Fort of Domapara and stayed the night in the mango grove at Bhagipur. On the afternoon of his wedding-day he had no sooner reached Godi-Sahi four miles from Cuttack, when a terrific rainstorm blew up. By the time he got to the sands of

the Kathyodi, it was pouring down. His concert party and catering were in chaos. The storm caught and mangled his majestic conveyance, and he was reduced to an ordinary palanquin. But when he got to the north bank of the Kathyodi, the rainstorm abated, and somehow he arrived at Kanika Palace. The royal wedding was duly celebrated, and after the service the Manager pledged to repay all the King's debts. Upon my return to Domapara, however, officials informed me that the Manager had not honoured his pledge : very little had been repaid to the money-lenders.

At about this time a boil came out in my right armpit. An incompetent doctor lanced it. The pain from it produced a fever. I took to my bed. The lanced wound grew gradually alarming. Its head was small, but pus had gathered from the armpit to the elbow. All forms of treatment, Ayurvedic, Homoeopathic and Allopathic, proved equally abortive. The day after the doctor had given me up, a gentleman, related by marriage to the House of Domapara, came from there to see me. At his suggestion I smeared a little ghee on a padma-palasa leaf, warmed it and bound it to the wound, which, after six days of such treatment, completely healed. It had been a close shave.

During my illness the King dismissed me at the suggestion of the Manager of Kanika and the Kanika princess. The King was, as I said, week-minded. When it was put to him that all his debts were my fault, he sacked me. The fault was not mine, but his. During the three years prior to his marriage to the princess of Kanika the following expenditure in addition to normal living costs had been incurred:

Last rites of the Queen Mother	Rs. 9,500
Last rites of the Queen	Rs. 3,500
Maintenance of the Royal Palace	Rs. 5,000
Survey and reassessment costs	Rs. 3,000
Last rites of the King's maternal grandmother, Radhika Patamahadei	Rs. 500

	Rs. 21,500

Not a single penny of this had been borrowed money... Oh well, I had pushed through the Kanika marriage in the teeth of all opposition. This was my just reward. I had to suffer the fruits of my deeds.

During the many years which had elapsed since the last settlement I had made in Domapara in the reign of the previous king, much waste land had been brought under cultivation. I engaged officials to survey and assess this land. This second settlement of mine increased the annual land-revenue in Domapara by as much as Rs. 3,000. There was no accommodation or water supply at hand in Domapara for distinguished guests. I therefore built a bungalow and stone well for this purpose opposite to the Palace's Lion Gate. People still call this building 'Phakir-mohana's bungalow'. I knocked down all the old buildings in the Palace and rebuilt them in brick, adding a new bungalow. Since there was neither a well nor a tank in the village of Nijgarh, in the hot season people had to fetch water from the River Rana, which being far away made it no easy matter. In memory of my wife I dug a well at the edge of the village. On the stone ledge of this well is inscribed: 'Srimati Krsnakumari Devi, Balasore'. I constructed the well at my own expense. There was no link-road towards north from Nijgarh to the Banki road near Pathpur. People used to travel back and forth between Pathpur and the village of Kusapangi through thorny bamboo thickets and across boggy marshes. During the rainy season flood water from the Mahanadi rendered these marshes impassable. People from the eastern region of Domapara used to come and go from Pathpur through the jungles and over the mountains. Though the King himself and senior officials travelled by elephant, the marsh water touched the howdah at times. To ease matters for travellers I wanted to build a road from Nijgarh to Pathpur, but I never got round to it. I did start building a school, but only the walls were finished when I left Domapara in 1896.

I received the letter of dismissal from the King of Domapara during my illness. With difficulty I got into a

palanquin and went to see him, but he was not at home, so I went to Kanika Palace, where the boy-king, Nrpendra Narayana Bhanja, made me heartily welcome in the old familiar way, and we sat talking, and laughed as of old. I can still see in my mind's eye the charming image of the young prince, as he was then. Still a minor, the poor boy had never enjoyed power. I said nothing of what was on my mind. I took my leave and returned to my quarters. That was to be my last leave-taking of him. I had dozed off at about nine o'clock one morning some five or six days later, when suddenly I cried, 'Ah ! The king of Kanika is dead !' 'Which king died, father, which king ?' asked my twelve-year-old daughter, who was seated nearby. 'It's nothing,' I replied, rousing from my drowsiness. 'I was just talking in my sleep.' Two hours later the news of the King's death arrived. I estimated that he must have died at the very moment I cried out.

My health recovered, but not my finances. The King of Domapara invited me to his bungalow in Baksi Bazaar and offered me a pension of one hundred rupees a month. I could not bring myself to accept so much for doing nothing, so he hired me as his Cuttack agent at forty rupees a month. I was to look after his horse and carriage and stable them at my Cuttack home. My other duty was to be the King's companion in the mornings. After a few months I gave the job up.

After severing all connexion with Domapara I heard the King's debts mounted finally to seventy thousand rupees. He cut off all contact with Kanika and its palace. Indeed, the very mention of the place vexed him. He was on edge with anxiety over his debts: the money-lenders were about to sue. To save him from their clutches, Cuttack's renowned lawyer, Madhusudan Dasa, paid off his debts with a low-interest loan from the King of Keonjhar.

Though freed from the bugbear of debt, the Kings' mental balance toppled. He lay constantly on his couch in the grip of depression. In the end he went rambling off out of touch with his palace. His solid good-looks slowly crumbled. Finally he fetched up in Calcutta, where on the Ganges' all-absolving banks his end came.

CHAPTER 21

MY YEARS IN CUTTACK (1896-1905)

(AGE 53-62)

I had long cherished a desire to live in Cuttack. I had been keeping an eye open for a suitable property and at the first opportunity had bought a bungalow near Baksi Bazaar. For a man of my slender means it turned out to be impossible to live in. It was a huge place with a multiplicity of rooms. It had its own separate tank (i.e. small reservoir) and was surrounded by gardens, an immense compound and a big brick boundary wall—in fact, the kind of place Europeans live in. For me its drawbacks were the lack of cultivated neighbours and the long trek from schools, offices and friends. The ownership of the bungalow placed me in a difficulty. For professional purposes I had to live outside Cuttack, so who was going to let it, collect the rent and keep it in repair? By selling half I acquired just such a person. My remaining half of the bungalow brought me in a rent of Rs. 40 a month, so I hung on to it for about 22 years and then sold it to Mr Madhusudana Dasa, only when the financial need was imperative.

I had been looking for a building plot near the schools and offices, and one evening came across one in Bakharabad Dhuanpatoria Sai. It was a two-thirds of an acre plot enclosed by a brick wall. I was told that the famous zamindar Bhagavana Raetsinha had had a place there. It was now in ruins and he would sell. The plot was assessed at one and a half rupees a year. I got it dirt cheap. I built a house there and moved in in 1896. Being short of money I went into business as a timber merchant and door and window manufacturer.

It was decided that the conferences of the Indian Congress and the Indian Unitarians would take place in Madras

during the Christmas holidays in 1898. The Congress Chairman was then the late Ananda Mohana Bose. I was selected as both the Balasore Congress delegate and the Balasore Unitarian delegate by the local National Society and the Brahma Samaj. Letters to this effect were sent to the conference organisers in Madras. I travelled to Madras by rail from Baranga. It was in Madras that I had my first and last experience of Congress. Most of the topics at the conference were political. Though there was no immediate likelihood of our political aspirations succeeding, it would nevertheless be wrong for us to leave our grievances unsaid. Congress was unifying the well-educated and patriotic from all over India in a common desire to free our motherland from its evil condition. Lack of unity was the main cause of India's past downfall.

One day while on the way to visit the Madras Museum I saw Mahatma Bala Gangadhar Tilak standing at the roadside talking to some people. I began to speak with him. Afterwards when I went to salute him, he caught my hand and said, 'No, you mustn't'.

On another day I went to visit the Madras harbour, which was built by the Government to protect ships from the force of the ocean waves. Two stone embankments extended gradually and gracefully out to sea. Instead of joining, their two ends remained apart leaving a gap through which ships entered the sanctuary of the harbour. The huge breakers expended their whole impetus on the embankments: none of it penetrated the harbour. Beautiful jetties with rail lines from end to end have been built out from the harbour shore. Trains transported the goods unloaded by crane from the ship straight into the town.

Another sight worth seeing in Madras was Pachchappa's College. Mahatma Pachchappa was deservedly famous. He was born at Kancheepuram in 1754. Some months later his father, Visvanath Mudaliyar, died, and his mother fled to Madras, where she took refuge with a richperson named Narayan Pile. Educated in English by the tender-hearted Pile, Pachchappa went into commerce and finally secured a responsible job under the East India Company, where he made

his fortune. Being childless he philanthropically bequeathed to the general public many lakhs of rupees. On this endowment Pachchappa's College was founded and is now financed.

In a park on the outskirts of the town I saw a marble statue of Queen Victoria.

In order to visit Adam's Bridge at Rameswar, I travelled down to Kancheepuram. I got off at the station there and went to see the pilgrimage places of Sivakanci and Visnukanci. Adam's Bridge at Rameswar is seven or eight hours' journey further on. My servant refused to go, so I turned back. I booked from Kancheepuram to Vijayavada, where I got off and bathed in the River Krishna. I have never seen such a beautiful iron pillar as the one there. On my way home I changed at Eluru, then came straight to Cuttack.

Receiving a telegraph in 1899 from the zamindar of Kendrapara, Laksmi Narayana Jagaddeva, I set out by steamer for Kendrapara and arrived there at 8 p.m. on Friday, 27 October. There had been two brothers, Radha Syama Narendra and Gauri Syama Narendra. The following genealogical tree illustrates the descent of the present zamindars from these two brothers.

Radha Syama Narendra	Gauri Syama Narendra
Jagannatha Bhramarabara Raya	Ramagovinda Jagaddeva
five brothers, viz	

Balarama Bhramarabara Raya, Laksmi Narayana Jagaddeva
 Syamasundara Narendra,
 Vrajasundara Mardaraja,
 Vrndavana Candra Haricandana,
 and Gokula Candra Sricandana

I found that both zamindars were up to the ears in debt. In each case the reason was the same: excessive entertaining and religious observances.

The two zamindar families vied with each other in religious observances. The Holi Festival was upon us. A man came to the zamindar claiming that the head of the rival family was commissioning five troupes of boy dancers. 'Then 'we'll engage seven,' said Laksmi Narayana Jagaddeva. 'But they'll bag all the best troupes,' the man said. 'Give me some money, and I'll nip along the same road and commission them first. Then they won't get any good ones.' Saying which he took some money and was off. No one kept track of how much was spent on what.

One day a Sadhu from Vraj turned up. When at the sight of him the zamindar prostrated himself on the ground in salutation, everyone else sprawled on the ground in front of him too with the same ardent devotion. That evening Kirtan, or the rhythmic chanting by Vaisnavites of god's name, was performed in front of the idol. 'Look', the Sadhu cried, when the Kirtan was concluded, 'see how the Lord's face is shining.' My quarters were near-by. When told of it, I went along to have a look. There was no brightness to be seen. 'Brightness used to emanate from the Lord's face like this, when he was grazing the cows,' the Sadhu declared. There and then it was decided to celebrate Krishna's grazing of the cows the following day. The next day a few clay cows, calves and bullocks arrived together with a clay Krishna and one or two cowherd boys with sticks in their hands. The bill for the celebrations came to about seventy rupees. Since the treasury was empty, the money had to be borrowed at high interest. This was how they went on.

The main source of ruin for these two distinguished Kendrapara families was the four-month feeding of the Sadhus during rainy season. Famed throughout India, this event turned to Sadhus all the rogues, rascals, humbugs and idlers India possessed and brought them streaming to the monastery at Kendrapara. Turning Sadhu is not difficult. All one need do is plaster one's head in gum from the Banyan tree, mat one's hair, and smear one's body in dust and ashes. Such people make no bones about putting on a loin-cloth. The

rest period for Sadhus extended from the first day of Asadha (June-July) to the sacred month of Kartika (October-November). And what sort of fare did they enjoy ? Rice, dal, curry and bread, whenever they pleased, and special provisions for sweetmeats and delicacies, plus a constant supply of ganja, bhang, molasses, sugar-cane and tobacco. And naturally these aspiring Sadhus simply had to go on pilgrimage, for which purpose travelling expenses, clothes, blankets and money were indispensable.

Thanks to the entertainment offered by the zamindars some Sadhus became money-lenders. The zamindar's temple provided rice, dal, flour, sugar and ghee for the Sadhus to eat. They ate their fill of rice and dal, sold the flour, sugar and ghee in the market and pocketed the money. In this way Sadhus saved quite a bit. They even lent some back to the zamindars. Two Sadhu money-lenders of this type turned up in Kendrapara while I was there. They had lent the Zamindars five hundred rupees a piece. They said they had brought a party of Sadhus with them. These Sadhus were in Cuttack. They would go away provided the principal and interest were repaid. Should there be so much as a day's delay in repaying, however, they would bring their Cuttack gathering to Kendrapara. This gathering comprised sixty Sadhus and ascetics, and some elephants, camels and horses. It was no mean threat. If these Sadhus came to Kendrapara, their daily upkeep would cost at least one hundred rupees. The treasury was of course empty. By scraping a loan, we managed to pay off the interest, and a fresh note of hand was drawn up for the principal. I was told that this pair of money-lenders had stayed in the zamindar's monastery during each four-month feeding of the Sadhus for ten years running. They had turned money-lender on their monastery savings. Three years earlier I had read in a Government report that the Sadhus in India numbered thirty-nine lakhs.

Whilst in Kendrapara I fully investigated the zamindari's financial position and found that very little money

remained from its various sources of income once the interest on its debts had been paid. There was no way of repaying the principal without selling all or part of the zamindari. Meanwhile an execution suit was pending for more than one lakh of rupees. This could, I calculated, be repaid by selling parts of the zamindari, provided the zamindar agreed to manage on what remained of his income after the interest on his debts had been paid. After that we could mortgage the remainder of the zamindari to a Calcutta money-lender and take out a low-interest loan. Then gradually the debts to money-lenders could be repaid. In this way, my calculations showed, it would be possible to save half the zamindari. The zamindar ignored my suggestions and continued as before, plainly telling me that he refused to reduce in any way his expenditure on religion. I had been in Kendrapara for nine months. Seeing no way of saving the zamindari, I resigned and returned to Cuttack.

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When I returned from Kendrapara, I was fifty-seven years old. I never took another post under anyone. I just stayed at home in Bakharabad in Cuttack. It had taken much time and effort to find the site and much perseverance to build the house. The house was now surrounded by various kinds of flowers and fruit trees, which seemed like sylvan bowers and added much charm to the small edifice.

Much of the poetry of my last years was composed in that little house. One day a rose and the next a rajani-gandha flower would catch my eye and of these I began to write. Then I observed that for several months each morning at the stroke of nine, two haladi-vasanta birds would come and sport in my flower garden. I wrote a poem about them, then another about two pigeons flying side by side in the sky, and then another about the thoughts that arose in my mind as I sat on the stone embankment of the Kathyodi at evening time. I gathered all these poems together and published them in a book called *Avasara Vasare* (Leisure-time Verse).

I first began writing poetry in Balasore. I used to write amusing verse for a magazine, put out by the local press, called *Bodha-dayini Patrika*. I also wrote a story for it, called *Lachamania*, which may well have been the first Oriya story ever published. It was read eagerly, though by how many? When I left Balasore to work in the feudatory states, I gave up writing. For nine or ten years I wrote nothing. Then, when my first son died, I began translating the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* to console my wife. My translation of the *Mahabharata* was started in 1881, the year my second son was born. The whole eighteen books were finally finished in 1902, the year my son took his B. A. When I was working in Domapara for the second time, my wife Krsnakumari died. I poured all the anguish of those days into two slim books of verse *Puspamala* (Flower Garland) and *Upahara* (Presentation). While living in Cuttack I began reading the *Upanisadas* and translating them into Oriya. I have always suffered from pain in my legs. Purnacandra Dasa, the son of an eminent zamindar in Balasore, was staying with me in Cuttack and studying for his F.A. (First Arts Examination) at Cuttack College. He helped me considerably, whenever my legs troubled me, and was also of signal service, when I was translating the *Upanisadas*. I used to lie on my sick bed, translating and dictating the verses, and he wrote them down. Without Purnacandra's help, my translation of the *Upanisadas* would never have been published.

While I was living in Cuttack, I began writing novels. First of all I wrote a story called *Rebati* and gave it to the editor of *Utkala Sahitya* to publish in his magazine. The stories and novels I wrote at this time were published under the pseudonym, Dhurjati, which was suggested to me by my dear friend Madhusudan Rao. Then I began a story called *Cha Mana Atha Guntha*. It gradually grew and grew till it became a full length novel. After that I began a novel called *Apurva milana* (Marvellous Meeting), which was published (serially) under that name in *Utkala Sahitya*. But when it came out in book-form, I renamed it *Lachama*.

These novels and stories were very popular, especially *Cha Mana Atha Guntha*. When the account of Mangaraja's trial in this latter work began appearing in *Utkala Sahitya*, some naive country-folk came to Cuttack to attend the trial. In 1905 my son was appointed Sub-deputy in Balasore and I left Cuttack to move there with him.

CHAPTER 22

RESIDENCE IN BALASORE (1905-1918) (AGE 62-75)

I came to Balasore in 1905. I have been living here for thirteen years now. My wife, Krsnakumari, died and left me long ago. My son is constantly away on Government business. Most of the time I have been living here, my daughter-in-law has also been away. Cut off from friends and relatives, I have spent these thirteen long years in almost complete solitude. Constant loneliness has been my destiny. In childhood I was an orphan. In youth I was in far-away places, separated from my wife. And even in old age I live alone, parted from my son. Solitude affords me plenty of time for reflection. I am not good at work, because of my constant illnesses, but times of illness and stress seem to improve my writing. During these long years of loneliness I have been granted peace by Krsnakumari's tomb in my garden and in the garden near the house that I call 'tranquility grove' (*santi kanana*). Cradled in this peaceful solitude, I composed the last works of my life, *Mamu*, *Prayascitta*, *Baudhavatara Kavya* and this present work, *Atma Jivana Carita*.

While I was alone, Nanda Kisora Bala, the poet, was appointed Headmaster of Balasore District School. He came to stay with me. During the summer we used to take a couple of armchairs out into the courtyard and chat from dusk till about ten each night. Most of our talk was of Oriya literature. While together, we wrote numerous poems and stories. But Nanda Kisora Babu was shortly transferred elsewhere. I am not destined to enjoy the pure happiness of such nocturnal companionship ever again. We both remain engaged in literature, dedicated to the advancement of our mother-tongue. We are both 'poor poets in search of fame' (*mandah kavi yasaprathi*), For me such days of happiness have completely ceased.

One July day in 1909, when I was having a bout of diarrhoea, my bailiff, Srikantha Pattanayaka, gave me some undiluted sulphuric acid, believing it to be medicine. When diluted, it can serve as a medicine, but since it and water are both colourless, one cannot tell by looking at it, whether it is diluted or not. That was why I did not realise, when I drank it, that it was undiluted. But the moment it went down, I burnt from tongue to stomach. The Assistant Surgeon gave up hope of saving me. I was conscious, but paralysed. I resigned myself to dying and lay still, meditating on God's name. But somehow my daughter-in-law's nursing saved me.

Just two years later I was afflicted with 'back boils' (*prstha brana*), a most disagreeable disease. Fortunately, it was diagnosed early, and I was saved the full brunt of it. One day while I was still under treatment Maharaja Vaikunthanath De Bahadur came to see me carrying two leaves in his hand. 'These are guhalia leaves,' he said. 'I recommend them for your back. They are a certain cure.' I agreed to use them. After talking with me for some time, the Maharaja prepared to go and said, 'I'm off to Calcutta in the morning, Phakirmohana Babu. I'll see you when I get back.' Alas, to the misfortune of Balasore, he never did get back. He took cholera in Calcutta and died. I heard the news on my sick bed. I have met very few true altruists like Vaikunthanath De. He used to rush to my side whenever I was ill or in trouble. It was not only me that he rushed to help, but any gentleman in the town, the moment he heard the man was not well. In Balasore he took the lead in promoting education, in striving for the advancement of our language, and in every work for the public weal.

The day after the Maharaja's visit, I read a substantial article on Ayurvedic medicine in a Bengali monthly called *Pravasi*, which stated that the leaves of the guhalia creeper had been known to the great seers as a cure for 'back boils'. After I had engaged men to search for some, a Midnapore zamindar, named Dvarakanath Maiti, came to see me. He

told me that a female relation of his had been cured of 'back boils' with panisiuli leaves. There were some in my tank. I sent for some and had them bandaged to my back. A few days later small holes appeared in the affected region and exuded pus. By the grace of God, I was shortly cured.

Unbroken enjoyment of neither health nor happiness was ordained for me. Ten or twelve months after my recovery from 'back boils', I was afflicted with an painful case of urustambha, or abcess of the thigh. (This often proves fatal.) My left thigh began to suppurate in several places and to exude pus. I was confined to bed for a considerable time. During that illness received help and sympathy from numerous people. Vaikunthanath's successor, Kumar Manmathanath De, used to come to look after me almost every morning and from time to time he brought me medicine from the clinic. One day Maulavi Asaraph Ali Kavyaratna arrived with lots of sweetmeats for me from Calcutta. And earlier when I had been laid up with that acid, a young friend of mine, a distinguished Oriya author, Mrtyunjaya Ratha, Kavyatirtha Vanibhusana, had travelled up from Cuttack to see me. I recovered from this dreadful disease.

Towards the end of 1915 a dedicated patriot and servant of Orissa, a leading member of the Bihar-Orissa Council, Gopabandhu Dasa, stayed with me for two days on his way back from Calcutta. On the morning of his departure, he stood motionless, gazing fixedly at me, with tears streaming from his eyes. When a little while later his composure was regained, he said gently, 'These last two days have taught me the condition you're in. You're weak, helpless and alone. You need more than servants to care for you now. You really ought to have some relations staying with you to help you and look after you.' Such sympathy from my compatriots has been the comfort of these last years of mine.

In these last years my fellow-countrymen have rewarded me well for the little service I have done for our literature and land. In 1916 I received the title of Sarasvati from the

Suratarangini committee in Bamra. The chairman at the presentation was Raja Saccidananda Tribhuvana Deva. My fellow-countrymen honoured me immeasurably, when towards the end of 1917 they selected me to chair the conference of the All-Orissa Oriya-speakers. And now, bowing with reverence to my readers and fellow-countrymen who, wish me well, I take my leave.

Phakirmohana Senapati died at the age of 75 on 14 June 1918.

APPENDIX

(A portion of Atma Jivana Carita)

The post of Oriya pandit at the Balasore District School was held by Sadasiva Nanda from the village of Soro in Balasore District. His job was to teach Oriya and Sanskrit. When he retired, his place was taken by a Bengali, Kanticandra Bhattacharya, who probably thought teaching Oriya would be child's play. Though six months' hard work saw him through all the text-books then available in Oriya, his stumbling block was pronunciation. No matter how hard he tried, the unfamiliar retroflex consonants, 'l' and 'n', defied his stiff, old tongue, for Bhattacharya was almost of pensionable age, long past the time for learning languages. Indeed, his whole class roared with laughter, leaving him insufferably humiliated, whenever he attempted even the most commonplace Oriya phrases. But difficulties sharpen wits. Coming into the classroom one day, he exclaimed : 'Oriya isn't a separate language. It's merely a corruption of Bengali. There's no need to study it !'

I cannot say for certain, of course, but I imagine his class were overjoyed and called out jubilantly: 'Long live teacher. May he be free from care !' For the study of Oriya was a great botheration to them. Oriya was not then, as it is now, their compulsory Second Language. Then it was merely there to be studied by those who wanted to. No one minded, if it were ignored. This then was the position with the students. As for the teachers, they were all Bengali from top to bottom. So there was not a soul to put in a word for Oriya and Kanticandra's notions went unopposed.

It would not suffice merely to say Oriya was not a separate language. The statement needed substantiating. So Kanticandra set about writing a book in Bengali called '*Uriya Svatantra Bhasa Nay*' (Oriya is not a separate language),

* published in 'Satyabadi'—Part II (8—12 issue), 1324 Sala

which duly appeared in print. The Bengali Headmaster submitted a report on it together with a copy of the book to the European Inspector for Schools, who was then Mr R. L. Martin. The Inspector's office was in Midnapore and his staff were all Bengali. The Headmaster's report arrived on his desk already endorsed by the Bengali Deputy Inspector for Balasore,

Thus the Balasore Headmaster was swiftly instructed that in his School only Sanskrit and Bengali were to be taught.

There was not at that time a single highly-placed Oriya in any Government department, let alone the schools. All the Bengalis were of the same opinion. They were all equally disparaging of Oriya. And now there was a surge of elation amongst them. Kanticandra was walking on air, thinking he had achieved lasting fame in Orissa.

The Bengalis began to press for the abolition of Oriya in all grant-aided schools, not only in the English-medium ones; and on his country estate Mandal, the Bengali zamindar, set up a school that was to be exclusively Bangali.

Not only in Balasore, but throughout the whole of Orissa, Bengali officials were guided by one overriding aim and purpose: the abolition of Oriya.

A sense of embattled rivalry had in any case prevailed in Orissa between Bengalis and Oriyas. Now one party was jubilant with impending victory, whilst the other sat silent and dispirited.

The boisterous derision of our enemies seared our flesh like branding irons. We were thunderstruck, unable to believe our ears. Was it no longer possible to study our mother-tongue ? How could it be ? That small powerless committee of ours held a meeting. Day and night we racked our brains for a solution. We canvassed the support of the influential people in the town from door to door from early evening till late at night. We assembled the clerks from the

kacheri and begged them to find a way to save themselves. They all replied with one voice: 'This is the Government's affair. Our children will learn whatever the Government teaches. You don't expect us to get into trouble by questioning Government decisions, do you ?'

When they heard the opinion of the clerks, the land-owners and moneylenders living in the town refused to listen to a word we said. Some told us straight: 'We are not going to get ourselves fined for meddling in matters which Government clerks refuse to touch.'

Gaurisankar Ray deserves all our respect. He wrote cogent articles every week in *Utkal Dipika* in support of the Oriya language. We used to write a bit as well in our newly-established *Balesvara Samvada-vahika*.

Meanwhile we kept at it. Every minute of every day went in an unremitting search for a solution. One day we called all the clerks together after work and spoke to them. The gist of what we said was:

"Gentlemen. It was not the Government's decision that Bengali should be taught in the schools in place of Oriya. It was a Bengali plot. They tricked the European Inspector. They'll get Oriya abolished in the *kacheri* next. Don't you see ? The Bengalis hold all the top jobs. You were as proficient in Persian as Maulavis, yet your proficiency became worthless, when the Bengalis got Persian abolished and became clerks themselves. When Oriya is abolished, all the sons, brothers and in-laws of these Bengalis will become clerks. Mark my words, you'll all be dismissed, and in future your sons and grandsons will no longer be able to get Government jobs."

There was uproar in the meeting the moment we said this. 'No, it will never come to that,' everyone cried. 'Our children shall study Oriya.'

They all pressed us to tell them what to do.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

For the last four or five years, a number of friends and educated young men, for whom I entertain a paternal feeling, have been pressing me to write my life story. I do not find it easy to ignore their pleas; for the Oriya language is remarkably lacking in biographies; though, unfortunately, my own life is equally remarkably lacking in the kind of weighty matter that merits a biography. Furthermore, I am remarkably lacking in the seductive art of so setting down my tale as to fire prospective readers with any enthusiasm to peruse it. In fact, for the temerity, with which I embark upon this present enterprise, I have only one excuse to offer: I am firmly convinced that the not-too-distant future will find this sacred soil of ours teeming with autobiographers. All I want to do is to provide a path for them.

Phakirmohana Senapati

1917